



Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
February 27 – March 6, 2014

Table of Contents

The following news stories are divided into the following sections.

Aboriginal Arts & Culture	2
Aboriginal Business & Finance	12
Aboriginal Community Development	26
Aboriginal Crime & Justice	33
Aboriginal Education & Youth	51
Aboriginal Health	62
Aboriginal History	68
Aboriginal Identity & Representation	72
Aboriginal Jobs & Labour	79
Aboriginal Politics	81
Aboriginal Sports	84
Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources	87
Land Claims & Treaty Rights	101
Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women	109
Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations	146

Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Canada's Inuit: A long road home

Reclaiming human remains kept in foreign museums is not easy

Feb 28th 2015 | OTTAWA | [From the print edition](#)



The comforts of home

IN AUGUST 1880, eight Inuit from Canada's north-eastern coast agreed to travel to Europe to be exhibits in a human zoo. They soon died of smallpox, pining for home. The skeletons of Abraham Ulrikab and most of his companions were recently rediscovered, fully mounted for display, in the storerooms of a French museum. Inuit elders want their remains, and those of others who died far from northern hunting grounds in the 19th and 20th centuries, to come home. It will not happen quickly.

The government of Nunatsiavut, an Inuit region of northern Labrador established in 2005, has already taken back human remains from museums in Chicago and Newfoundland. David Lough, Nunatsiavut's deputy minister of culture, is not sure how many more there are to be reclaimed. But in 500 years of contact between Labrador and the outside world, many people and artefacts are bound to have ended up abroad, he believes. One woman, Nancy Columbia, was part of a group showing off Inuit culture at the Chicago World's Fair and found her way to Hollywood, where she starred in westerns as a Native American princess.

Until recently, museums resisted giving back human remains, in the name of science and cultural preservation. The British Museum's Egyptian mummies and the Amazonian *tsantsas* (shrunk heads) in Oxford's Pitt Rivers Museum are mainstays of their collections. But, under pressure from indigenous groups, they have begun to give way. The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted in 2007, enshrines a

right to reclaim human remains, as does legislation in Britain, Australia and the United States (but not in Canada). Scores of museums (including the British and Pitt Rivers museums) have drawn up repatriation policies and ethical codes on the treatment of remains. France's Museum of Man, where the skeletons of Abraham Ulrikab and his companions are stored, is willing to let them go, says France Rivet, author of a new book on the saga of the group. "They are just waiting for a request from Canada," she says.

The petition has not come, says Mr Lough, partly because "the Inuit way is to ensure everyone is consulted." The fragile state of Inuit communities makes that hard. Hebron, home to the Ulrikab family, was founded by Moravian missionaries. But the settlement was abandoned in 1959 when the mission closed; the family's descendants scattered. They must be traced to help decide where the remains should be buried and what sort of ceremony to hold. Nakvak, home to others in the original party, now lies in Torngat Mountains National Park. There are bureaucratic hurdles to using it as a burial site.

Only after the Inuit decide how to handle the remains can negotiations begin between the governments of Canada and France over releasing them and paying the costs of repatriation. Stephen Harper, Canada's prime minister, and France's president, François Hollande, agreed in 2013 to work towards repatriation. But South Africa waited eight years for Saartjie Baartman, "the Hottentot Venus", after Nelson Mandela requested her return in 1994. For Abraham Ulrikab and his friends, at least, the journey home is beginning.

Direct Link: <http://www.economist.com/news/americas/21645251-reclaiming-human-remains-kept-foreign-museums-not-easy-long-road-home>

10 things you don't know about Tantoo Cardinal

Cree/Métis actor honoured by ACTRA with award of excellence for over 100 film and TV credits

By Kim Wheeler, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 28, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Mar 03, 2015 2:54 PM ET



Tantoo Cardinal received the award of excellence for acting achievement from ACTRA on February 20, 2015. (Nadya Kwandibens, Red Works)

Tantoo Cardinal has over 100 film and television credits to her name. She is without a doubt one of the most prolific actors in Canada. She's appeared in TV shows like *North of 60*, *Arctic Air*, *Mohawk Girls* and *Strange Empire*. Her list of films include *Dances With Wolves*, *Legends of the Fall* and *Smoke Signals*.

Last week she was recognized for her work with the award of excellence from ACTRA - Alliance of Canadian Cinema, Television and Radio Artists.

Tantoo answers 10 quick questions:

1. How many children do you have?

Three.

2. What was your first major motion picture?

Marie Ann.

(In the 1978 film, her character's name is Tantou and she appears as Tantoo Martin in the credits.)

3. Who was your favourite co-star of all time and why?

I don't know. That's kind of unfair. Gordon Tootoosis - maybe? We have the longest history, 40 years. And we came through the times where we'd be the only brown people on set.

4. Who did you go to jail with?

Margot Kidder.

(Kidder played Lois Lane in the 80s adaptation of *Superman*. Hint: They were protesting the Keystone XL pipeline together.)

5. What's your favourite song to jig to?

The Red River Jig

6. Who is your celebrity crush?

I don't have one. There's so much talent out there. My crush is on people who are just such intense actors.

7. What is the one thing you cannot travel without?

My crossword puzzle book.

(She uses pencil.)

8. What kind of car do you drive?

A Toyota Prius. It is energy efficient and to move in the direction of using less, needing less and being less of a burden on what Mother Earth is providing all the time. She's always giving, giving, giving.

9. What is the one piece of advice you'd give to indigenous people?

Keep learning your language, keep learning everything that you can. Read, read, read. Think, think, think. Talk, talk, talk. Prayer, prayer, prayer. And if you're hearing some garbage in your head, get rid of it.

10. Bannock or frybread?

Bannock — baked.

Tantoo joins Unreserved's host Rosanna Deerchild for a chat about her career, environmental activism and how the portrayal of indigenous women has changed over the course of her career.

Tune into CBC Radio One after the 5 p.m. news in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Nunavut, and after the 4 p.m. news in Yukon and the N.W.T. for these stories and more on Unreserved.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/10-things-you-don-t-know-about-tantoo-cardinal-1.2976487>

Aboriginal culture celebrated during NAW

By Simmons, Garrett on March 1, 2015.

LETHBRIDGE HERALD

This year's Native Awareness Week (NAW) brings a full schedule of activities designed to celebrate Aboriginal culture and the 40th anniversary of the Native American Students' Association (NASA) at the University of Lethbridge.

The Native American Studies program and NASA have been part of the U of L from its earliest days.

"We're very, very proud of our record here," said Dr. Leroy Little Bear, First Nations, Métis and Inuit adviser to the U of L president.

Little Bear said universities are about the search for knowledge and historically, Eurocentric thoughts about knowledge have dominated academic halls.

"There are many ways to interpret reality and many ways to look at things other than through Eurocentric windows," said Little Bear. "The ways that Blackfoot people validate their knowledge and the Eurocentric approach to methodology is very different. So the inclusion of Native American Studies into the university really is an attempt to enrich the overall experience of students, faculty and the University as a whole."

The weeklong celebration begins with a blessing by Wilton Goodstriker at 11 a.m. Monday in the Atrium of University Hall. That's followed by the grand entry and a naming ceremony. The Mini Contest Powwow begins at noon.

Monday also features two performances of New Blood, a play created by Strathmore High School dance, Blackfoot and glee classes. Produced by U of L alumni, New Blood features poetry, music and contemporary and traditional dance. Inspired by the Writing-On-Stone petroglyphs and the life of Siksika Chief Vincent Yellow Old Woman, the play highlights his experiences in residential school and his fight to reclaim his way of life. The first performance at 4:15 p.m. is free for students and NAW visitors to campus. A paid performance open to the public is scheduled for 8 p.m. Tickets, at \$15 each, are available at the U of L Box Office from Monday to Friday 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. and one hour prior to the event, by calling 403-329-2616, or online at uleth.ca/tickets.

Tuesday's events include fry bread and berry soup from 11 a.m.-1 p.m. and medicine-bag making from 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. in the Atrium.

Wednesday features an open house and talking circle at Iikaisskini Gathering Place in the Paterson Centre from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. ART NOW will feature speaker Diane Landry from noon to 1 p.m. in the Recital Hall, W570.

On Thursday, Mike Bruised Head-Chief Bird, University of Lethbridge Alumni Association, FNMI chapter president, and Billy Wadsworth), a Blood Tribe councillor, will be on campus from 10 a.m.-noon for a talk titled, "Bringing It Back," and a special tribute to Narcisse Blood, who recently passed away. Brian Calliou, program director for the Banff Centre's Indigenous Leadership and Management program, will talk about aboriginal governance from 3-5 p.m. in Andy's Place. From there, the program moves to the Students' Union ballrooms for the Native American Students' Association's talent show and hand drum contest with Armond Duck Chief, beginning at 5 p.m.

Friday, the Blackfoot Digital Library project will be featured from 10-11 a.m. in the Recital Hall, W570, followed by ART NOW speaker Ruth Phillips from noon-1 p.m. Phillips, a Carleton University art history professor and Canada Research Chair, will discuss works made to pay homage to Norval Morrisseau, a prominent First Nations artist. A round dance at 6 p.m. at the Friendship Centre brings the festivities to a close.

Throughout the week, documentaries will be shown daily from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. in the NAS department, A410.

Direct Link: <http://lethbridgeherald.com/news/local-news/2015/03/01/aboriginal-culture-celebrated-during-naw/>

NAC chef John Morris takes inspiration from the Arctic

[Peter Hum, Ottawa Citizen](#)

Published on: March 4, 2015

Last Updated: March 4, 2015 11:24 AM EST



The NAC's Executive Chef, John Morris (pictured serving), used Arctic-sourced ingredients like char, caribou and seal to make mouth-watering dishes at an advance tasting of items to be served at the March 10 A Taste Of The Arctic fundraiser.

For the last two years, John Morris, the National Arts Centre's executive chef, has played each spring with ingredients from Canada's North, fashioning gala-ready fare from caribou, Arctic char, seal and even whale skin.

From the start, he's known that making these proteins delicious for Canadians who live below the tree line essentially means cooking them out of context.

In the Arctic, the Inuit traditionally eat meats raw or frozen and with a minimal seasoning. But Morris's task involves cooking and dressing up those proteins and juxtaposing them with alluring, accessible ingredients.

"We want to present the food in a traditional way, but palatable for an Ottawa palate," he says.

That's the tack he will take March 10, when the NAC for the third year hosts A Taste Of The North, a fundraiser for the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, the non-profit organization that represents more than 50,000 Inuit in Canada.

Among the 10 items on Morris's menu will be some refined takes on Northern staples. There will be caribou hip, roasted and served with Saskatoon berry jus, and seared seal, and seal sausage in jambalaya. Morris will take traditional dried caribou and match it with green lentil stew. He'll serve dried Arctic char with caper and fennel slaw and champagne mustard vinaigrette.

Last week, at the NAC's Le Café restaurant, Morris gave an advance tasting of some of his dishes to an Inuit gathering that included Terry Audla, president of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami.

Once that tasting was done, the Inuit returned the favour, laying out a mini-feast for Morris and other invitees that showcased some of the same ingredients, but served as they would be in the Arctic. Using traditional ulu rocking knives, morsels were hacked from pieces of raw char, frozen or dried caribou and whale blubber and shared with a smile. "Country food," the Inuit called it.

The combination of both meals made for a fascinating cross-cultural get-together.

The Inuit consensus was that Morris's roast caribou was to die for, even if, as Audla said, many Inuit prefer cooked meat well done. That's despite their affinity for raw meat at home, he added. "I still can't figure that out," Audla said.



Carved caribou hip with sunchoke puree, created by National Arts Centre chef John Morris for the March 10 fundraiser A Taste Of The Arctic.

Morris' seal jambalaya prompted a bit of initial wariness from some Inuit about its spiciness. (It was just fine.) Audla told me that Morris's dish used harp seal from Newfoundland. "Most Inuit prefer ring seal, which is more tender and less gamey," he said.



Seal Jambalaya, created by National Arts Centre executive chef John Morris for the March 10 fundraiser A Taste Of The Arctic.

Audla, who was raised in Resolute Bay, Nunavut, the second northernmost community in Canada, went on to extoll the tastiness of fermented seal fat as a dip for raw and frozen meats.

He said that one Inuit dish involves mixing Arctic char with blueberries and fermented seal fat, and that a mix of salmon, blueberries and mayonnaise might produce something similar.

“But it’s better with fermented seal fat,” Audla said.

However, Audla added that he didn’t care for fermented walrus meat. “It’s an acquired taste,” he said. “I can’t eat it. It’s way too strong.”



Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami President Terry Audla cuts Arctic Char at the media launch of A Taste Of The Arctic.

The Inuit might well have liked Morris' dessert best of all, and especially the Labrador tea-infused chantilly cream that accompanied his crêpes along with salted caramel sauce and a chokeberry chutney.

For his part, Morris made observations at the Inuit table about the clear, pure flavours of the meats and fish. While others at the table talked about liking their caribou more or less frozen, Morris and I noted that Inuit palates graded temperature and "doneness" in the opposite direction of our own.

When Inuit served whale skin and blubber and advised that it be dipped in soy sauce, I tried some and thought of the octopus I had eaten a few days before at a sushi restaurant. Morris remarked on the whale fat's creaminess, and indeed there were the melted traces of those and other animal fats on our fingers because we were eating with our hands.

"The lack of pretentiousness in terms of dinnerware, silverware and so on, perhaps shone an even brighter spotlight on the food itself, having been stripped ... of any distractions," Morris later said.

Q & A: NAC chef John Morris

Q: For your Arctic dishes, did you get seal carcasses to break down or just the meat?

A: We can get seal shipped to us in a few "primal cuts." The back strap is removed and is referred to as the loin. The flippers (front shoulders) are removed and sold as flippers. The carcass is then quartered and sold as racks and carcass meat. Internal organs — kidneys, liver and heart — are packed and sold separately.

Generally we have found the shoulders or flippers are tougher than the loin and require a moist heat technique to fully make them enjoyable, such as braising. Two years ago we actually made flipper confit with them and this was quite successful. The loin was used for the jambalaya, and this is the opposite and is much better when quickly sautéed and not overcooked as it quickly becomes tough and dry, due to the leanness of the meat.

Q: Why did you make jambalaya with seal?

A: The choice of making a jambalaya seemed natural to me. Jambalaya is traditionally made with meat and seafood together, and the taste of seal meat is unique in that it has properties of both a meat as well as a fish-like flavour. Also, it is not a mild flavour by any means and so is able to stand up beside the rice that was scented with a hot smoked paprika.

Q: What's the mix of pork-to-seal in your seal sausage?

A: The seal sausage contains a ratio of about 60-per-cent seal and 10-per-cent pork and 30-per-cent pork fat. The seal meat is so lean that if you put more than 60 per cent, the sausages become dry, crumbly and not very appetizing when cooked.

Q: At the country food meal, did you have a favourite item?

A: Wow. It's difficult to choose! I have to say the pipsi (dried Arctic char) was amazing. Such a pure flavour of Arctic char coming through. This is a method of preserving the catch where the char filets' flesh is scored deeply in a criss-cross fashion, similar to how some people would cut a mango. The filets are then hung from sticks and dried naturally by the sun and the wind. At this mini-feast, we got to try tender morsels of pipsi from two different filets of char, and I for one relished them both for different reasons. I believe one of the sides had either been hung for less time or perhaps it was simply that that particular char was a more oily fish, but certainly one of the sides was more moist and slightly more tender than the other – although both were delicious and showed a deep respect for the ingredient and the clean fresh flavour came through very well.

Q: What did that Inuit meal mean to you?



Anna Fowler of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami on the left and Elisapee Sheutiapik (the former mayor of Iqaluit, on the right) cut whale skin in the NAC's Le Cafe restaurant at an event in advance of the March 10/2015 Taste of the Arctic fundraiser.

It taught me that the sense of community around the ritual of enjoying food together is an integral part of the Inuit culture, as it is in many cultures. Something I found to be unique and special was the way the Inuit women would use their ulu knives to cut the food into

portions and share them amongst the table, kindly offering delicious bites of food in between pleasant and happy table conversation.

A Taste Of The Arctic

When and where: March 10, 6 to 10 p.m., at the National Arts Centre

What: A fundraiser for Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Canada's national Inuit organization, featuring Inuit performers and dishes relying on Northern ingredients by NAC executive chef John Morris.

On the menu: Fish and seafood platter including smoked Arctic char and poached Arctic shrimp, Arctic clam chowder with bannock, dried caribou with green lentil stew, seaweed rice wrap with tamarind birch sauce, dried Arctic char with caper and fennel slaw and champagne mustard vinaigrette, whale skin crackling with spicy vinegar dipping sauce, carved caribou hip with Saskatoon berry jus, sunchoke purée, jambalaya with seared seal and seal sausage, muskox burger, crêpes with chokeberry chutney and salted caramel sauce and Labrador tea chantilly cream.

Admission: \$199 at www.itk.ca/taste-arctic-2015

Direct Link: <http://ottawacitizen.com/life/food/nac-chef-john-morris-takes-inspiration-from-the-arctic>

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Chiefs' lobby group out of bounds

By: Trevor Greyeyes

- Posted: 02/27/2015 3:00 AM |

Publicly funded indigenous political lobby organizations should not be going into business.

That's the bottom line.

Now to be clear, and for full disclosure, I have to acknowledge a few business partners and I were putting together a plan to market to First Nations consumers a reloadable, prepaid credit card.

But now we have to revisit that plan with the announcement that the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs (AMC) is putting out its own reloadable prepaid product in partnership with VisaCanada and DCR Strategies Inc. to market to First Nations people.

Why is the AMC going into the prepaid credit card business?

The short answer, of course, is the federal government has reduced the annual budget of organizations such as AMC to \$500,000 a year.

When you couple that with a federal government that has indicated it will only approve grants for projects in areas it deems a priority, you have a situation where First Nations people making high five- and low six-figure tax-free salaries are shaking in their office footwear.

That is not to say organizations such as AMC don't have a role to play. However, if Manitoba chiefs want a political lobby organization that represents their voice, then shouldn't it fall on those same chiefs to fund the organization themselves?

I'm just saying AMC's role shouldn't be going into business to compete against First Nations entrepreneurs.

How is that promoting economic development?

I have no problem with First Nations communities going into business, but lobby groups are paid to lobby, not to start businesses in competition with aboriginal entrepreneurs. The AMC is not a First Nation, but a not-for-profit incorporated entity.

I can also point out that a large part of their plan is to market the prepaid credit cards to people on social assistance.

People can rightly ask me: "Well, how does your exploitation of the poorest members of our communities differ from AMC's?"

Well, as entrepreneurs we identified a social need within our communities with governments and businesses moving away from issuing hard-copy cheques to more electronic forms of digital monetary transfers.

And since we are all First Nations peoples who live and work off reserve, any profit would have been entirely taxable. Oh, you didn't know that as a small businessman living and working off reserve, I am expected to pay the exact same taxes as everyone else.

I am also in the negotiation process to purchase an existing business, but maybe I should check with the AMC or one of the other organizations first to make sure there isn't some plan to go into that business as well.

Now, if you look at it, the AMC is a government-funded political lobby group for First Nations chiefs that has used its staff expertise and time to put this little enterprise together on behalf of a grand chief who makes an annual six-figure tax-free salary.

And it falls on me to also point out the various First Nations organizations such as the AMC and the Assembly of First Nations have been basically rendered impotent and irrelevant in today's political climate.

If you want to see true leadership, then you have to look no further than to the women and youth of our community.

Althea Guiboche, a single mother, feeding the homeless and destitute once a week with her Got Bannock campaign. Rosanna Deerchild hosting community forums on racism. Or KC Adams' art display Perception that challenges racial stereotypes of aboriginal people. Michael Champagne's Meet Me at the Bell Tower still remains as strong as ever after six years.

Now to me, that's leadership.

Trevor Greyeyes is editor of the First Nations Voice.

Direct Link: <http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/analysis/chiefs-lobby-group-out-of-bounds-294331981.html>

Tax Season 2015: First Nations pay more tax than you think

Fewer than half of all aboriginal people qualify for tax exemptions - and even less can actually use them

By Aleksandra Sagan, [CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 02, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Mar 03, 2015 1:18 PM ET



The notion that First Nations people in Canada don't pay tax is a myth. Tax exemption applies to less than half of all aboriginal people, and even among those, the number who can claim it is limited to specific living and working scenarios. (Todd Korol/Reuters)

There's a common misconception in Canada that aboriginal people don't pay taxes, but, in fact, tax exemption applies to fewer than half of aboriginal Canadians — and even they have to have very specific work and living arrangements to benefit from it.

Misunderstandings about aboriginal people and taxes "absolutely" exist — even among First Nations themselves, says Manny Jules, chair of the First Nations Tax Commission.

"[Non-First Nations people] feel that no status Indian pays anything in terms of tax," he said. "People do pay taxes — excise tax, income tax, sales tax — all of those."

Only some status Indians are exempt from paying taxes, and even then, it's in very specific situations.

Who is exempt?

First Nations people who are recognized as status Indians under [Section 6](#) of [the Indian Act](#) may be eligible for some tax exemptions.

The act has existed since 1876 and initially conferred Indian status on male members of certain bands, their children and their wives. Later amendments extended it to others who may have lost it over subsequent generations — women who married non-status men and their children, for example.

'People do pay taxes — excise tax, income tax, sales tax — all of those.'- *Manny Jules, First Nations Tax Commission*

In 2011, there were 637,660 registered status Indians, or slightly over 45 per cent of Canada's aboriginal population, according to Statistics Canada.

But that doesn't mean all of them are living tax-free. Most exemptions on income, sales and property tax apply only to status Indians living or working on reserves — or both. In 2011, less than half of all registered status Indians, or about 314,000 people, lived on reserve, according to Statistics Canada.

"It is definitely a myth," says Chief Darcy Bear of the notion that aboriginal people don't pay taxes.



Aboriginal people who make a living from fishing have to factor in where they fish and where they sell their catch when figuring out whether they have to pay income tax. (Jacques Boissinot/Canadian Press)

Bear is chief of the 550 people living on Whitecap Dakota First Nation near Saskatoon. He says even the status Indians who don't pay federal and provincial taxes on income end up getting taxed in other ways.

What's more, about 22 per cent of working-age status Indians living on reserves are unemployed and have no employment income, according to 2011 figures from Statistics Canada, which defines working age as 25-64. (It is unclear how many employed people living on reserves also work there.)

Anyone not eligible to be or not registered as a status Indian follows the same tax rules as all other Canadians.

In 2011, that amounted to about 55 per cent of the 1.4 million aboriginal people in Canada. Inuit and Métis people are also excluded from the Indian Register and are regular taxpayers.

What is exempt?

[Section 87](#) of the Indian Act exempts the "personal property" of status Indians from taxation. This includes:

- Income earned on a reserve (including income from employment or investment).
- Property located on a reserve.

When status Indians purchase goods on a reserve, they also often do not pay GST or HST. If they buy something off reserve but have it delivered to the reserve, the GST and HST exemption still applies. Status Indians living on remote reserves may be allowed to get the GST and HST exemption for goods they bring back to the reserve.

'We're paying tax all the time.'- *Chief Darcy Bear, Whitecap Dakota First Nation*

Some provinces allow partial HST rebates for certain goods purchased off reserves.

But Bear points out that often, it simply doesn't make financial sense to use the sales tax exemptions.

There are no large shopping centres on Whitecap Dakota First Nation, for example, so residents often travel about 20 minutes into downtown Saskatoon to shop, he says. Buying something like a pair of jeans and paying for delivery will cost residents more than opting to pay the GST/HST and bringing the item back themselves.

"We're paying tax all the time," he said.

Is it really that cut and dry?

A status Indian living and working on a reserve is "a slam dunk" for tax exemption, says Bruce Hurst, a certified general accountant with RHN, an accounting firm that works with First Nations in B.C.



Oranges for sale at a store on the Attawapiskat First Nations reserve in northern Ontario. Most goods bought on reserve are exempt from tax, but a few First Nations have introduced their own goods and services tax. (Frank Gunn/Pool/Reuters)

"That's kind of your starting point," he says.

But individuals and businesses who have more complicated situations and might qualify for tax exemption must determine how much of their income-earning activity happens on reserve and how much happens elsewhere.

"Oftentimes, that's a bit of a grey area," said Hurst.

The Canada Revenue Agency outlines several factors used to determine whether businesses and self-employed individuals can be tax exempt, including:

- Where the business or person carries out revenue-generating activities.
- Where its customers are located.
- Whether or not an office or books and records are kept on a reserve.

Taxes on income earned by fishermen, for example, can be tricky, says Hurst, because where individuals fish and where they sell their catch is important, but they frequently work in waters that can be difficult to classify.

"If that's their traditional fishing grounds, there's a possibility that, that would be considered to be exempt," he said.



Chief Darcy Bear, left, of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation in Saskatchewan, pictured with then minister of aboriginal affairs John Duncan. Bear's community is one of several that have imposed their own tax systems. (Fred Chartrand/The Canadian Press)

Farmers are in a similar situation, with tax officials scrutinizing where they grow and harvest crops, keep cattle or milk dairy cows.

If some business activities occur on reserve and some off reserve, the tax exemption for income and business expenses may be prorated.

Status Indians and businesses are also not exempt from paying excise taxes and duties on certain manufactured products. For example, Grand River Enterprises, a company making cigarettes on Six Nations of the Grand River land near Brantford, Ont., pays about \$160 million annually in excise duties, said Jules.

What about tax credits and benefits?

Status Indians or couples with tax-exempt income may still be eligible for some of the same tax credits and benefits as taxpayers.

In order to qualify for benefits such as the Canada Child Tax Benefit, tax-exempt individuals must still file a tax return, Hurst said, and declare their income under a section labelled: "Indian (exempt income) — Employment."

Hurst said one of his First Nations clients earns tax-exempt income on reserve but is married to a non-First Nations woman who works off reserve. On their income tax return, they declare his income for tax purposes but include her income in the special section.

"It might be exempt income for tax purposes, but it would be classified as working income for the purpose of calculating all these other tax credits," Hurst said.

Why do exemptions exist?

The CRA [points out](#) that the Supreme Court of Canada emphasized in [a 1990 decision](#) that tax exemption for First Nations serves in part to protect aboriginal land and "to make sure tax does not erode the use of Indian property on reserves."

It is not meant "to help remedy the economically disadvantaged position of aboriginal people in Canada or bring economic benefits to them," the CRA says, paraphrasing the decision known as Mitchell vs. Peguis Indian Band.

The tax exemptions on property, in particular — which, the court points out, de facto date back to the Royal Proclamation of 1763 — exist "so that lands couldn't be lost by Indian people ... through forfeitures, tax sales, those kinds of things," Jules said.

When it comes to income, the exemption is also owing in part to the fact that, historically, aboriginal people were considered wards of the state.

"Income taxes didn't apply because, generally, you don't tax people that are not your citizens," Jules said.

Do reserves collect taxes?

Just because some status Indians don't pay federal and provincial income taxes doesn't mean they pay zero tax. There are more than 600 bands in Canada, and some reserves levy their own taxes on residents.

Bear says those communities are following in the tradition of the "sharing model" that's always been a part of First Nations culture.

"If your best hunter killed 10 buffalo, he doesn't eat 10 buffalo himself. He shares with the whole community," he said.

Not only hunters participated in this kind of exchange — everybody had a gift to contribute, Bears says, such as making clothing or sharing their wisdom.



Horses graze on the Eden Valley reserve in Alberta. Tax exemptions for First Nations came about in part as a way to prevent the sell-off and forfeiture of traditional aboriginal lands. (Jeff McIntosh/ Canadian Press)

Today, that sharing model takes the form of special tax systems on some reserves, including Whitecap Dakota First Nation, which has implemented a variety of different taxes that status and non-status Indians must pay on reserve.

The First Nations Tax Commission helps band governments develop property tax regimes. More than 150 First Nations have implemented property taxes on reserves, bringing in \$70 million annually, according to the FNTC. First Nations use the revenue to build schools, roads and other infrastructure, says Jules, and to help pay for elder care and education.

'In a lot of cases ... First Nations individuals are now becoming mainstream taxpayers.'- *Bruce Hurst, accountant, RHN*

The Whitecap Dakota First Nation has charged a property tax for about a decade, says Bear. Some of the revenue pays for language and culture programs. Bear says it's important for the First Nation to generate income so it can invest in its No. 1 resource: its people.

Eight reserves charge a five per cent First Nations sales tax on alcohol, fuel and/or tobacco bought on their land, according to the CRA. Twenty-six First Nations, including Whitecap Dakota First Nation, have implemented a five per cent First Nations goods and services tax on products bought on reserves.

Fourteen self-governing aboriginal communities, which have entered into agreements with the federal government to no longer be governed by the Indian Act, have imposed a First Nations personal income tax, generating about \$18 million annually, according to the CRA.

"In a lot of cases, you know, the First Nations individuals are now becoming mainstream taxpayers as a result," said Hurst.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/business/taxes/tax-season-2015-first-nations-pay-more-tax-than-you-think-1.2971040>

Aboriginal entrepreneurs awarded for business pitches

By [Thomas Piller](#) Associate Technical Producer Global News
March 2, 2015 7:59 pm



Aboriginal entrepreneurs pitched their business plans at the Aboriginal Youth Idea Challenge for a chance to win \$10,000 on the weekend in Saskatoon.

SASKATOON – An awards gala was held at the University Club Saturday. The 2015 Aboriginal Youth Idea Challenge (AYIC) gives young people aged 16 to 35 a chance to build their business ideas into reality.

AYIC has provided participants with mentorship over the last two months. Entrepreneurs came together with their final business models to compete for \$10,000 of start-up capital at the gala sponsored by PotashCorp.

Organizers say this year's panel participants are bringing their 'A' game.

"They've been with us at all the workshops we've had throughout the semester, I've spent multiple hours working with these individuals one-on-one to help them take their business plans to the next step," said AYIC project leader Preston Thomson.

Each entrepreneur gave a live pitch to a panel of judges Saturday.

First place went to Devon Fiddler and her business, SheNative. Fiddler received a cheque for \$6,000 to put towards her handbag and accessory brand that aims to empower Indigenous women.

Marylou Mintram and Candace Linklater got \$4,000 for second place. Their business, Little Bow-tihk, intends to connect women with clothing that reflect northern Cree inspired designs.

AYIC is hosted by the University of Saskatchewan's non-profit organization [Enactus](#). The student-run group creates outreach programs to address social, economic and environmental issues.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1859840/aboriginal-entrepreneurs-awarded-for-business-pitches/>

Capital market access vital for First Nations involvement in resources: report

[Yadullah Hussain](#) | March 3, 2015 | Last Updated: Mar 3 5:16 PM ET



From left, The Working Group on Natural Resources Development members Assembly of First Nations Alberta Regional Chief Cameron Alexis, Douglas Turnbull and Richard Nerysoo speak to the media during a press conference at the Fairmont Royal York in Toronto on Tuesday, March 3, 2015.

TORONTO – Facilitating capital market access for First Nations seeking to participate in major projects would go a long way to involving aboriginal groups in resource development, according to a report by a group set up by First Nations in collaboration with the federal government.

The Working Group on Natural Resources Development's report, released Tuesday, suggests access to bond markets, government loan guarantees and even a First Nations sovereign investment fund, income trust and infrastructure funds to help aboriginal groups participate in the country's resource development.

"We heard over and over again that most First Nations communities don't have to access to adequate funding in order to be participants in development projects," said Douglas Turnbull, co-chair of the group and deputy chairman of TD Securities Inc.

The five-member group was set up by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) in December 2013 to identify ways for First Nations to participate in natural resource development projects in Canada.

Projects worth \$675-billion are estimated to be built in Canada over the next decade, but there are fears that resource development may stall due to inadequate aboriginal consultation and compensation by companies or developments that trample over First Nations' treaty rights or ignore environmental dangers.

"The question is whether we can get First Nations to come together to develop a capital fund that could assist in investment," said Richard Nerysoo, a member of the working group and of the Northwest Territories legislative assembly. "That conversation needs to happen nationally and it can happen only if First Nations leadership and those [financial] institutions are part of the exercise."

The idea of a sovereign wealth or resource fund is not far-fetched as some aboriginal communities in the north have a similar model, said Dwight Newman, Canada Research Chair in indigenous rights in constitutional and international law at the University of Saskatchewan.

"That's something that might be explored further," Mr. Newman said in a telephone interview from Saskatoon. "It's something that has potential."

The group's recommendations include undertaking a more comprehensive dialogue around revenue sharing and arranging forums featuring First Nations, Canada, provinces, territories, industry, and non-governmental organizations.

"Today's governance approaches and tools to engage First Nations in natural resource development are too few and limited in scope," according to the report. Often, First Nations respond to an already-defined project as part of regulatory reviews or fixed processes for consultation and accommodation.

"Such approaches ignore the existing jurisprudence relating to Aboriginal rights and title which creates uncertainty, lack of trust, and unnecessary risks for all players," the report said.

Other recommendations include establishing technical information resources to enable First Nations governments and businesses to participate more fully in all aspects of natural resource development. The group also recommends organizing an international conference in the next 12 months to “examine and expand direct First Nations involvement in resource development, trade relationships, business partnerships, and access to foreign markets.”

The report did not delve into individual developments, but the group says First Nations need to “be involved in the boardroom” at the start of each project so that can steward development that’s mindful of environmental issues.

For their part, First Nations also need to communicate their vision for natural resource development, including expectations and plans for community involvement in a project, the report recommended.

The group held working sessions between businesses and aboriginal groups in Toronto and Edmonton last November to encourage a “frank discussion”.

“There is an ideological perspective, that we shouldn’t have development,” Mr. Turnbull said. “I think that’s just naïve, and it bothers me that there are people in the debate that seem to be implying that First Nations should stay in poverty, and shouldn’t be part of development. I think we are past that as a country.”

Direct Link: http://business.financialpost.com/2015/03/03/capital-market-access-vital-for-first-nations-involvement-in-resources-report/?_lsa=8709-a6cb

Six Nations dips into fund to cover deficit

By [Michael-Allan Marion](#), Brantford Expositor

Wednesday, March 4, 2015 8:59:29 EST PM



OHSWEKEN - Six Nations elected council has tabled a 2015-16 budget that calls for a projected deficit of \$3.6 million that will have to be covered by gaming revenues.

According to a consolidated workplan budget agreed to by council and posted on council's website, Six Nations has projected total revenue of a little more than \$63 million and expenses of about \$66.6 million.

To cover the deficit, council will have to dip into its annual Ontario First Nations Limited Partnership revenue of \$7.3 million. The OFNLP is a limited partnership that distributes gaming revenue to First Nations across the province according to a formula.

Dipping into that revenue will balance the books this year, but it will take money needed for other programs, elected Chief Ava Hill lamented in her regular video update on the administration website.

The consolidated budget shows \$63 million in revenue. Here's how it breaks down:

- \$14.1 million from the federal government;
- \$15.5 million from the provincial government;
- \$970,000 in Six Nations' own interest revenue;
- \$28.5 million in miscellaneous revenues, including bingo and user fees in parks and recreation, public works and other departments.

The highlights of the \$66.6 million in expenses are:

- \$28.9 million in salaries, wages and benefits for 731 employees;
- \$20.4 million in other expenses;
- \$10.5 million in administrative expenses;
- And \$6 million in utilities.

The budget documents show the Ontario Works Six Nations, social affairs, housing and health departments will operate on a breakeven level, but lands and resources, parks and recreation, public works and fire departments will have to incur deficits to provide an expected level of service to the community.

Land and resources has projected revenue of \$120,000, but total expenses of \$1.4 million for a deficit of \$1.3 million.

Parks and recreation will have revenues of \$696,000 and expenses of \$1.4 million, for a deficit of \$700,000.

Public works has projected revenues of a little more than \$3 million and expenses of \$4.2 million, for a deficit of \$1.2 million.

"The resources from the federal and provincial governments are just not sufficient enough to cover those deficits. Federal funding for First Nations has continued to

decrease year after year. Provincial revenue remains the same and Six Nations' own source revenue continue to cover off the shortfall," finance director Gary Phillips said in an email.

After covering the deficit, the remaining \$3.6 million in the OFNLP fund is dedicated to: a \$1 million repayment on the loan for the new water treatment plant; \$100,000 to Six Nations participation in the Pan Am Games; \$150,000 toward the new firehall; in addition to the \$500,000 already paid.

Grand River Enterprises has pledged \$2.65 million to the fire hall.

"After doing all that, we have very little money left," said Hill.

Council will continue to build its economic development corporation to drum up more revenues. With the federal government continuing to cut back, there is little choice, she said.

"There is still a lot of need."

Direct Link: <http://www.brantfordexpositor.ca/2015/03/04/six-nations-dips-into-fund-to-cover-deficit>

Aboriginal Community Development

First Nations fires caused by housing shortage, chief says

Deadly Makwa Sahgaiehcan fire triggers memories of fire that killed 4 people in Mishkegogamang

By Jody Porter, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 27, 2015 8:00 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 27, 2015 9:40 AM ET



Mishkeegogamang, which has an on-reserve population of close to 1,000 people, had 12 people die in house fires during a three-month span in 2014. (Martine Laberge/Radio-Canada)

A shortage of safe housing on First Nations reserves is leading to too many deaths in house fires, says the chief of Mishkeegogamang First Nation, located 320 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, Ont.

The community of nearly 1,000 has lost 27 people in house fires since 1977, Chief Connie Gray-McKay said. The death of two children in a fire at Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation in Saskatchewan was a stark reminder of four people killed in Mishkeegogamang in a house fire last winter.

A state of emergency was declared at Mishkeegogamang after the 2014 fire and Gray-McKay pushed for an inquest to look at inadequate housing as a root cause of fatal fires in First Nations.

"You look at the fire in Saskatchewan, I mean how many more people, children, need to die needlessly like that?" Gray-McKay said in an interview with CBC News this week.

Gray-McKay's request for an inquest is stalled by [Ontario's problems with Aboriginal representation on jury rolls](#).



Mishkeegogamang First Nation Chief Connie Gray-McKay says 250 families are on a waiting list for housing in her community. (Martine Laberge/Radio-Canada)

The housing shortage at Mishkeegogamang means that many families continue to live in one-room plywood shacks with roaring wood stoves to keep warm, she said.

There are 250 families on a waiting list for a house in the First Nation, Gray-McKay said. The community receives funding from the federal government to build four houses per year or repair existing homes.

"We'll never catch up," she said.

Housing 'a basic human right'

The First Nation is financing renovations on some homes to make them more livable and safe for families, the chief said, but even that puts pressure on the community's budget.

"I don't think that outsiders, and I say outsiders respectfully, I don't think they fully understand the costs of building in First Nations," Gray-McKay said. There are no building supply stores within hundreds of kilometres of Mishkeegogamang.

Repairs were recently finished on one house and now chief and council have the difficult decision of determining which of 10 families in desperate need of a house, will get to live in it, she said.

Housing is the number one problem in every First Nation, Gray-McKay said, and governments fail to realize that money spent building homes would reduce social services and policing costs that result from multiple families crammed together in small houses.

"Housing is a basic human right," she said. "Someone from the government needs to come and live in our community to really understand that."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/first-nations-fires-caused-by-housing-shortage-chief-says-1.2974540>

FSIN chief slams Wall over fire comments

Premier calls criticism 'ridiculous'

By Charles Hamilton, The Starphoenix March 4, 2015



FSIN interim chief Kimberly Jonathan

The interim Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) took aim at Premier Brad Wall for comments he made after two toddlers died in a house fire on a northern Saskatchewan First Nation.

Last week, Wall told reporters the fatal incident on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation "underscores the need for leadership" in First Nations communities.

FSIN Chief Kimberly Jonathan shot back on Tuesday, accusing the premier of exploiting the toddlers' deaths.

"That any leader would exploit the deaths of innocent children and use a tragedy such as this to attack all First Nations leaders is inherently wrong and truly unfortunate," Jonathan said a statement released to media.

Jonathan said any suggestion that First Nations leaders aren't "concerned about the safety and well-being of their citizens is baseless." She said had the premier initiated discussions directly with First Nations, he would have found that work is ongoing.

Wall issued a statement of his own in response, saying he stands by what he said.

"The context for my remarks to the media was the importance of local leadership on this issue of fire protection on First Nations and I stand by them," the premier said in the statement. "... I would never even think to exploit the tragic loss of any life. For interim Chief Jonathan to suggest this is ridiculous."

Wall said he also brought attention to the leadership of Saskatoon Tribal Council Chief Felix Thomas, who has started a review of fire services on First Nations under his leadership.

"I stand by my comments in the memory of these children and in the interests of fire protection and safety for all Saskatchewan residents," Wall said.

"Local leaders: Reeves and Councillors, Mayors and Councillors and yes, First Nation Chiefs and Councils, must lead in their communities. Fire protection is a local responsibility. All leaders must assume that responsibility and protect their citizens."

According to the FSIN release, the FSIN and other tribal councils are "well on their way" to developing an institution that would provide essential services such as fire protection to all First Nations in the province.

The new approach would be an institution run by First Nations for First Nations, instead of other levels of government, the statement said.

"This paternalistic approach is all too familiar to First Nations and has not produced any meaningful improvements in our collective health, well-being or quality of life in the past century and a half," Jonathan said.

Two -year-old Harley Cheenanow and his 18-month-old sister Haley died Feb. 17 after fire broke out at their home.

The volunteer fire chief of nearby Loon Lake received a call about the fire, but his crew didn't attend because the First Nation's firefighting contract with Loon Lake had been cancelled as of Jan. 30 due to unpaid bills.

The provincial Emergency Management and Fire Services division said in a statement last week that the cause of the fire is "undetermined" and the exact point of ignition is unknown. The home had a battery-operated smoke detector, but it's not clear whether it was working.

As of Tuesday, an online campaign to help the family of the two children had raised \$10,000.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/FSIN+chief+slams+Wall+over+fire+comments/10859917/story.html>

Local agencies mull over issues in urban aboriginal populations

[Kristen McEwen](#)

Published on March 04, 2015

As the aboriginal population grows quickly in Prince Albert -- and the rest of the province -- members from various community agencies met on Wednesday to address the concerns affecting urban aboriginal populations.



Aboriginal Friendship centres of Saskatchewan engagement co-ordinator Cathi Wilson-Loescher, centre, hands out papers for members of local agencies to fill out during a consultation at the Prince Albert Indian Métis Friendship Centre on Wednesday.

A federal funding gap that can stretch several months each year is one of the challenges urban aboriginal populations face, said Bernice Sayese Centre executive director Dawn Robins.

Robins noted that government programs tend to finish on March 31 and resume at the beginning of the school year, leaving families without support for the summer months.

“The government has to look at the year and when things flow so that they support the front line people, whether that be the school or the school year,” she said.

An absence of funding during summer months was one of many concerns brought up at the Prince Albert Indian Métis Friendship Centre.

The Aboriginal Friendship Centres of Saskatchewan recently partnered with Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada to consult in communities across the province.

The purpose of the consultations is to identify barriers preventing urban aboriginal people from fully participating in the economy, said engagement co-ordinator Cathi Wilson-Loescher.

“We’re going to be developing a five-year strategy,” Wilson-Loescher said. “This is one of the steps in the process to help us really understand local needs in Prince Albert and area.”

Wednesday’s consultation included community agencies such as Prince Albert Parkland Health Region, Prince Albert Police Service, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Prince Albert Métis Women’s Association and various service organizations.

Wilson-Loescher noted that the aboriginal population in Prince Albert has continued to grow in Prince Albert, from 18 per cent in 2006 to nearly 25 per cent in 2011.

“At the same time, we see the gaps in education continues to exist,” she said. “There’s about a 20 per cent gap for high school graduation rate between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people.”

Within the economy, there also appears to be a 20 per cent gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people participating in the labour force, Wilson-Loescher said.

A young and growing aboriginal population indicates that the future lies with aboriginal people, she added.

“They will be the employees (and the employers),” Wilson Loescher said. “The strategy is going to try to give some direction and some funding to help organizations, really assist aboriginal people, as best as they can in the economy.”

During the consultation, the organization members broke into groups to brainstorm various problems that needed to be addressed.

Denise D'Amour and her group noted that many problems are the consequence of not having opportunities, funding or support.

For example, in households that struggle with poverty, affordable housing, the older children are kept home from school to take care of their younger siblings.

"The cycle continues because they don't (have) their literacy rates," D'Amour said.

Robins noted that the consultation was an opportunity for services and organizations in Prince Albert to come together to share resources and programs.

"It's nice to see people around education (here) because education is our future," she said.

Direct Link: <http://www.paherald.sk.ca/News/Local/2015-03-04/article-4065735/Local-agencies-mull-over-issues-in-urban-aboriginal-populations/1>

Fire protection in place for First Nation

Makwa Sahgaiehcan, Loon Lake reach agreement

By Charles Hamilton, The StarPhoenix March 5, 2015

If a fire broke out on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation today, firefighters from nearby Loon Lake would be there to put it out.

After a house fire on the reserve claimed the lives of two toddlers, a dispute between the First Nation and neighbouring town is settled and the Loon Lake volunteer fire department is again providing services to the reserve.

Loon Lake volunteer fire chief Larry Heon said the deaths of two-year-old Harley Cheenanow and his 18-month-old sister Haley have been a wake-up call for the entire area.

"It opens everyone's eyes and it makes them work together. We are one big community," Heon said in an interview Wednesday.

Volunteer firefighters did not respond to the blaze on the Makwa Sahgaiehcan First Nation that killed the two toddlers because of a dispute over unpaid bills.

In a meeting held Tuesday, all the finances were settled and the chief of Makwa Sahgaiehcan and representatives from Loon Lake's volunteer fire department hammered out a deal, Heon said.

Like the rural municipality and the town of Loon Lake, Makwa Sahgaiehcan will pay a \$5,000 annual "membership fee" for fire services. Like the RM and the town, the First Nation will be charged for any additional costs associated with putting out fires on the reserve.

In the wake of the toddlers' deaths, tensions between the First Nation and the town were running high. Many in the community blamed the volunteer fire department for not responding to the fire. One young man was even arrested and accused of making threats against Heon on Facebook.

Now, however, the initial "finger-pointing" has subsided and calmer heads have prevailed, Heon said.

"It was tragic accident. The chief said right in that meeting it was an accident."

Chief Richard Ben, who was re-elected days after the Feb. 17 fire, could not be reached for comment.

Although it appears the dispute over fire services on Makwa Sahgaiehcan is settled for now, the toddler deaths are still causing an uproar provincewide. Earlier this week, Kimberly Jonathan, interim chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), took aim at Premier Brad Wall, accusing him of exploiting the toddler deaths.

Wall shot back, telling reporters that Jonathan's suggestion was "ridiculous."

"Long before we lost Haley and Harley, this government was working with First Nations and the federal government on the issue of improved fire safety on First Nations," Wall said.

The province helps train volunteer firefighters, but it's up to local leaders to ensure fire safety, he said.

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Fire+protection+place+First+Nation/10863128/story.html>

Aboriginal Crime & Justice

Unlicensed notary tells B.C. Supreme Court Judge Canadian laws don't apply to him

By Dan Fumano, The Province February 28, 2015

A Vancouver man who acted as a rogue notary, officiating documents for Freemen-on-the-Land and others, represented himself Friday in B.C. Supreme Court, saying the laws of Canada do not apply to him.

The Society of Notaries Public of B.C. (SNPBC) has alleged the unlicensed notary, a man named Sino General, poses “a threat to the public as a result of his unlawful activities.”

The SNPBC obtained a court order in Nov. 2013, demanding General, also known as Hajistahénhway and Chief Rock, stop acting as a notary.

But General has since breached the terms of that injunction by continuing to hold himself out as a notary, court heard Friday, and the SNPBC alleges he is in contempt of civil court.

Justice Robert Sewell heard the case and his decision is expected Thursday. If General is found guilty of contempt of civil court, he could face a fine and possible imprisonment.

General maintains that as a Native from the Cayuga Nation, he is “exempt” from Canadian law, and “I don’t believe any evidence exists that we are under Canadian Law.”

“I don’t believe the (2013) injunction had any real merit,” General said to the judge Friday. “This court lacks jurisdiction and never had jurisdiction in the first place to get an injunction.”

General said the court didn’t “have the capacity or authority” to make a ruling that he believed would supersede centuries-old treaties between First Nations, Canadian governments and the Queen of England, which were the basis of his argument.

But David Georgetti, lawyer for the Notaries Public, said “this is in no way whatsoever a First Nations issue. This is an OPCA issue.”

OPCA refers to an Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument litigant, a legal term for a category of vexatious litigants, including antigovernment groups like the Freemen-on-the-Land, Sovereign Citizens and others. The SNPBC alleges General is an OPCA litigant.

The term OPCA was defined in a landmark 2012 court ruling in Alberta. Georgetti frequently referred to the Meads decision in his submissions to the judge Friday,

including the passage where Associate Chief Justice John Rooke quoted Dante's Inferno, where the 14th-century Italian poet "placed the 'evil counsellors' those who used their position to advise others to engage in fraud ... into the inner canyons of the eighth circle of hell."

Georgetti said OPCA litigants often "hijack perfectly legitimate ideas and submissions that this court ought to hear — things like religious rights or First Nations rights — and they use those as cloaks, to disguise what they're really doing."

General disputed the OPCA label and said he is not affiliated with the Freemasons, although some of the people he helped may have been part of the movement.

Georgetti described the kinds of documents that General's appeared to have notarized, saying they were consistent with the "sham debt-elimination schemes" and "money for nothing schemes" common to OPCA cases.

Affidavits related to General's case include copies of several documents apparently signed, stamped, or otherwise "notarized" by General. These include a purported court order demanding \$100,000,000 be paid by the Haisla Nation Council to a plaintiff, solemn declarations purporting to appoint peace officers, attempts to eliminate credit card debt, and something called a "private indemnity bond" which seems to demand a payment of \$9,000,000 from a B.C. Cabinet Minister.

The day before Friday's hearing, General told The Province he believed the documents he had notarized were valid legal documents.

Ron Usher, general counsel for the SNPBC, said "I have never seen (General's) notary seal on a legitimate document. Not once."

General told The Province that some of the documents he had notarized for people had helped them get rid of their credit card debt.

But Usher said he was "completely skeptical" of such a claim, saying if such people exist, "let them come forward."

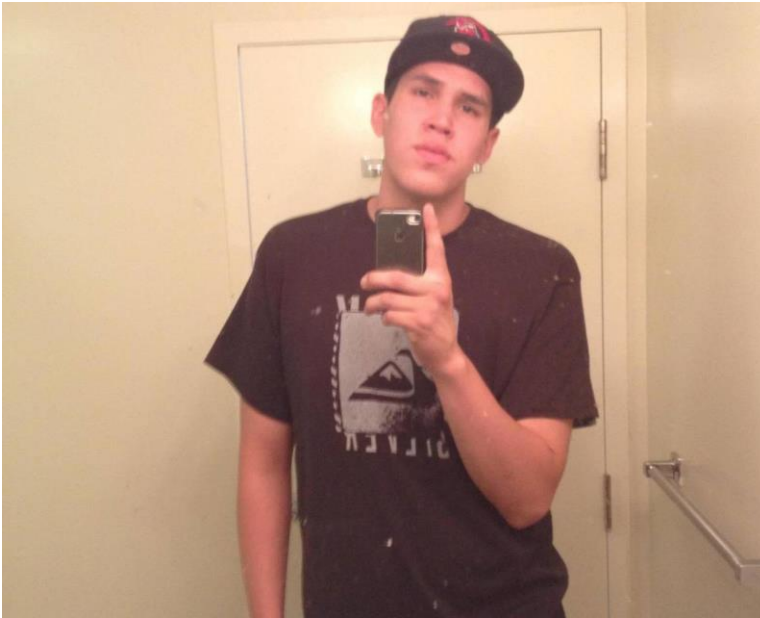
Usher added: "I would put that on the walk-on-water level of improbability."

Direct Link:

<http://www.theprovince.com/business/Unlicensed+notary+tells+Supreme+Court+Judge+Canadian+laws+apply/10849913/story.html>

Grand Chief Stewart Phillip promises to seek answers in Transit Police shooting of Naverone Woods

by [Charlie Smith](#) on March 1st, 2015 at 3:22 PM



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip has criticized the media for reporting the name of a young man shot by police [before his family learned](#) the news.

"I think it's absolutely appalling that our police agencies and the media do not have the basic fundamental respect for our families not to contact the families first," Phillip said at a memorial event in Surrey yesterday for [Naverone Woods](#).

Woods, a 23-year-old member of the Gitksan First Nation, was killed by Transit Police inside a Surrey Safeway store on December 28 after pulling out a knife and stabbing himself repeatedly.

The Independent Investigations Office issued a [news release](#) that day saying that the man "reportedly came into contact with officers", according to police, and "was subsequently shot".

Woods was taken to hospital but didn't survive.

"I believe were we not indigenous or Native, there would be some consideration because you always hear on the news that they don't release the name until they contact the family first," Phillip continued. "But it would appear in our case that those rules of consideration and basic respect don't apply."

On behalf of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Phillip expressed his "genuine and sincere condolences and sympathies to the family for their tremendous loss".



Grand Chief Stewart Phillip with his wife Joan. Charlie Smith

He went on to say that First Nations are not "disposable people" and they "do not simply wander around in large urban areas without family".

"We come from large, loving supportive families. We come from proud communities and proud, sovereign, indigenous nations," Phillip said. "And we have a history on this land that goes back thousands upon thousands of years—long before the settlers arrived on our shores—and yet in this day and age, there still exists an absolute disrespect for not only our people, but the contributions we have made to the settler populations."

He said that when there's injustice perpetrated on one indigenous person, all indigenous people feel a sense of injustice, outrage, and hurt as they watch the story unfold in the media.

"So was the case with Naverone," Phillip added.

He elicited some smiles from the audience when he mentioned that in all of his travels, he's never heard a cooler name than Naverone.

"It's clear that he was an exceptional, amazing young man who was not afraid of hard work and had his whole life in front of him," he said.

Video of Grand Chief Stewart Phillip

Phillip pledged the support of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs to the family and said that his organization will not stop until it gets the answers around Woods's death.

"We know as indigenous peoples this is not an isolated incident," Phillip said. "This is part of a systemic racism and injustice that's perpetrated against indigenous peoples right across Turtle Island. And the list of names is long and many."

He emphasized that it's unacceptable that police can make decisions to shoot people "without any real consequences".

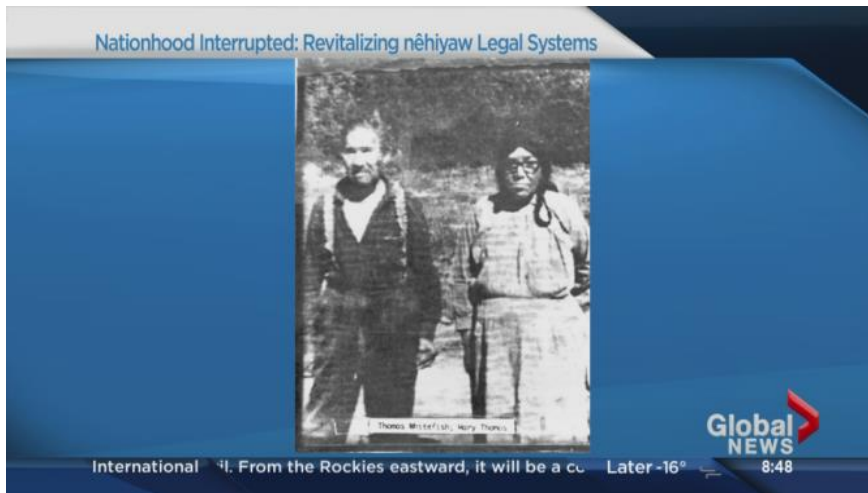
"Nothing happens," the grand chief alleged. "They get a couple of days off. Generally speaking when they get those days off—a few days of suspension—they're compensated. There's no accountability."

Phillip closed his speech by declaring: "We are not nobody. We are not transients that the police can shoot down at will. And we will make damn sure that there is accountability in this case."

Direct Link: <http://www.straight.com/news/401186/video-grand-chief-stewart-phillip-promises-see-answers-transit-police-shooting-naverone>

Book sheds light on unwritten indigenous laws

By [Doug Lett](#) Producer Global News
March 3, 2015 12:51 pm



SASKATOON – A new book seeks to shed light on the unwritten laws used by the Cree and other indigenous peoples. Called *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems*, the book is by Sylvia McAdam, one of the co-founders of the Idle No More movement.

“I want people to understand that indigenous people are not a lawless people – we have laws,” she told Global News. “The only difference is that our laws are unwritten.”

McAdam, who has a law degree from the University of Saskatchewan, said she decided to write the book after realizing that many people did not know what she meant when she started talking about indigenous laws.

“There’s not much difference, there’s laws, remedies, and identifying which laws have been broken,” she said. “The only difference here is our laws are unwritten. Which is not unusual, when you look at globally, different nations have unwritten laws.”

She said there isn’t much difference between the unwritten Cree laws, and Canada’s legal system.

“We all value our children, we all value freedom, liberation, justice,” she said. “There’s no real difference in those values and those ethics in raising our children to be lawful citizens.”

McAdam hopes readers will gain insight into the thoughts and worldview of indigenous people. And she said even when the Idle No More movement was beginning, the unwritten laws came into play.

“When Idle No More began I went and seen the elders ... everything that indigenous people do is grounded in ceremony, guidance and direction from elders, so I went and seen them. They said ‘if you’re going to do this you have to follow our peoples laws,’ and they said to me ‘you’re going to invoke one of our most peaceful laws’ ... it means to defend for children, but not just my children, it means all the children of the world,” she said.

The book is published by Purich Publishing, and includes a glossary of Cree words.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1861051/book-sheds-light-on-unwritten-indigenous-laws/>

Fire detachment responsible for Yellow Quill First Nation unclear

Town of Rose Valley, Sask. says no fire service contract is in place

[CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 02, 2015 10:24 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 03, 2015 6:42 AM CT



Yellow Quill First Nation is approximately 240 kilometres east of Saskatoon (Google Maps)

Questions still remain regarding where the first responders at the scene of a house fire on a First Nations reserve in Saskatchewan came from.

A fire broke out on Saturday at a home on Yellow Quill First Nation, which is located about 240 kilometres east of Saskatoon. The man who lived in the house was able escape before RCMP from the detachment in Rose Valley, Sask. arrived.

He received treatment from EMS for smoke inhalation and fire-related injuries while authorities determined no one else lived inside the home.

But the answer as to which fire department arrived on scene is still unclear.

There is renewed focus on fire safety and response in remote communities, particularly on First Nations reserves in Saskatchewan.

This is in the wake of the house fire on Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation in northern Saskatchewan that killed two toddlers last month.



The aftermath of a house fire on the Makwa Sahgaiehan First Nation that killed two toddlers in February 2015. (Kim Capiral/Newcap Television)

Deaths from fire on First Nations reserves are 10 times higher than in similar off-reserve communities.

Small villages often rely on contracts for fire emergency services from nearby towns.

Many remote locations in Saskatchewan cannot afford to staff a full-time fire department.

Conflicting responses from officials

CBC News contacted several parties involved, but found no clear answer on who was in charge of the response.

Chief John Machiskinic of the Yellow Quill First Nation was not sure whether the towns of Kelvington, Sask. or Rose Valley provided emergency services.

Saskatoon Tribal Council said the Rose Valley fire department responded to the house fire call.

However, an administrator from Rose Valley said the town does not have a contract in place to aid Yellow Quill First Nation for fire services.

Meanwhile, the provincial government released a statement saying a Saskatchewan Rapid Response Team was dispatched from Prince Albert to "provide support to RCMP and local authorities".

Brian Wilson, the fire chief in Moose Jaw, has more than 15 years of experience and said it is the responsibility of each town to maintain their emergency plans.

"I think the onus falls on every local community or every municipality," Wilson said.

He explained that under the Fire Prevention Act in Saskatchewan, communities must either choose to have a fire department or "still have a local assistance to the fire commissioner."

Wilson added that it is especially important for citizens to know the escape routes out of their homes in the event of a fire due to the speed homes can become engulfed in flames, despite official response.

The investigation continues under the Office of the Fire Commissioner.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/fire-detachment-responsible-for-yellow-quill-first-nation-unclear-1.2979387>

Aboriginal Inmates Go on Hunger Strike in Regina, Winning Access to Cultural Practices

March 4, 2015

By Geraldine Malone



The fence outside the Regina Provincial Correctional Centre. Photos by Jen Parenteau

Behind the fences, gates, and thick walls of the aging Regina Provincial Correctional Centre (RPCC) in Saskatchewan, 15 inmates began a hunger strike Monday morning. Living in a high-risk unit, allegedly with gang affiliations, the inmates turned away their food so they could instead have access to cultural programming to help them heal with First Nations customs.

"They don't let us smudge or go to sweat lodges or pipe ceremonies; they deny us all our cultural rights," inmate Joshua Bird [told the Regina Leader Post](#).

"They think they're making the jail a safer place by locking us away, but actually they're making us more violent and taking our human spirit away."

Later that same day, executive director of corporate affairs for the Ministry of Justice Drew Wilby explained that hunger strikes, especially to this extent, were rare but safety in the facility is top priority.

"It's a high-security, high-safety-risk unit. All of the individuals there have significant gang affiliations or they were put there because of behaviour within the facility as well as a concern about compatibility with other inmates," Wilby explained.

After local media attention and meetings with the inmates, the correctional centre staff and the inmates came to a compromise Tuesday afternoon. In an email to VICE, a representative for the Ministry of Justice said a smudging unit had been planned in advance of the hunger strike and would be operational within a week. The offenders will also get a microwave and an extra \$10 per week of their own money to spend in the canteen. The other request of the inmates, access to the outdoors, was not granted.

The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) executive director Kim Pate says that although solved quickly, it shouldn't have been an issue in the first place. CAEFS has worked with women in similar situations usually in federal facilities. Pate explained according to our Charter of Rights and Freedoms Section 15 people should have access to their religious practices and cultural practices whether or not they are in a correctional facility.



The Regina Provincial Correctional Centre

"Even in the most secure environments there are elders who have, will, and continue to provide opportunities for individuals to participate in ceremonies. There isn't an excuse unless the elders, him or herself, are saying they don't want to perform the ceremonies for whatever reason," says Pate.

"In this situation I suspect, although I don't know for certain, that the overcrowding issues, the cuts to programs and services generally, are limiting access to many provincial territorial and federal prisons right now."

A report released just five months ago by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives echoed Pate's suspicions. The report, called "[Warehousing Prisoners in Saskatchewan: A](#)

[Public Health Approach](#)," said Saskatchewan's prison system is among the most highly strained in Canada, with provincial jails housing nearly twice the number of inmates they were designed to hold. To accommodate the "crisis" classrooms, gymnasiums, workshops, and even visiting rooms are being turned into dormitories, and most of the province's cells are being double bunked, the report warned that triple-bunking is a "distinct possibility in the future." At the RPCC the report found some inmates had no washroom facilities in their cells. Inmates were left waiting for hours to be brought by a guard to a washroom, some using their garbage cans as an alternative. It also pointed to cancellation and discontinuation of programs, including cultural, because the rooms they would be done in were given a new purpose.

Pate says that in light of the hunger strike "it generally triggers... a concern that there is a much deeper and longer standing problem within that prison and usually it means that the rights have not been adhered to for some time."

Stacey Swampy has seen a lot of changes in the justice system. The former inmate spent more than 20 years navigating his way through the foster care system, welfare system, young offender facilities and eventually both provincial and federal correctional facilities.

"My dad was a bootlegger so I saw people come to the house 24 hours a day, seven days a week... I started drinking when I was nine," Swampy told VICE, adding his downturn really took hold after his father's death when he was 13.

"I started drinking more. I started doing drugs more. I picked the wrong role models. The people I looked up to were coming out of the jail system. They had tattoos all over them, good shape, (and) women chased them... I started to live like those people."

After spending the majority of his life in different kinds of facilities, Swampy started to connect with his culture from behind the bars.

"The ceremonies inside the system gives us the idea of who we are. If I wasn't allowed to attend ceremonies when I was in the system, I would probably be doing a life sentence or probably six feet under right now. The ceremonies that are in the system helped me deal with the traumas that I carried all of my life," says Swampy.

Unfortunately Swampy's story is less the anomaly and more likely the norm.

[A 2013 report by the Office of the Correctional Investigator](#) found that while aboriginal people make up about four per cent of the Canadian population, 23.2 per cent of the federal inmate population is aboriginal, the provincial system parallels similar statistics. The incarceration rate for aboriginal people is ten times higher than non-aboriginals and that over-representation just continues to grow. Since 2000 the federal aboriginal inmate population has increased by over 56 per cent and the overall aboriginal representation rate for inmate population has increased from 17 per cent to over 23 per cent. In just the prairies between 2010 and 2013 corrections saw nearly 40 per cent of all new federal

inmate growth and most was led by aboriginal offenders, who now comprise more than 45 per cent of the prairies' inmate population.

With the insight of 20 years in the system and now 10 years of sobriety, Swampy said it's critically important that First Nations people in and outside of the judicial system start connecting with their culture.

"The ceremonies show you what you need to be doing for yourself. It shows you how to be responsible, it shows you how to be accountable. Then you start to have that self esteem that we don't have (since residential school), that pride in who you are," says Swampy, who works alongside the [Str8 Up program in Saskatoon](#), Sask. to help women and men exit the gang life, adding that it's the only way to break the legacy of self destruction left by residential schools.

"That's what ceremony does for me, it's given me responsibility which I've never had before. Ceremony has given me accountability which I never had before."

Direct Link: http://www.vice.com/en_ca/read/saskatchewan-inmates-hunger-strike-highlights-the-need-for-cultural-services-576

New Ontario regulation paves way for aboriginal inquests to proceed

A new regulation in Ontario's Coroners Act has cleared the way for 12 delayed inquests in Thunder Bay and Kenora involving natives to go ahead.



TANYA TALAGA / TORONTO STAR file photo

Teacher Greg Quachegan holds up pictures of Paul Panacheese, left, and Curran Strang, who both drowned in the waters leading to Lake Superior. An inquest into their deaths and those of five other aboriginal youths may finally begin in late fall.

By: [Donovan Vincent](#) News reporter, Published on Wed Mar 04 2015

Twelve long-awaited inquests into the deaths of aboriginals — including seven young people — are set to proceed following a lengthy delay beset with questions about Ontario's jury system.

As first reported by the Star, Dr. Dirk Huyer, Ontario's chief coroner, abruptly halted the Kenora and Thunder Bay-area inquests last year amid concerns about the lack of aboriginals on jury rolls in those districts, particularly those living on reserves.

But a new regulation passed by the provincial government now permits on-reserve aboriginals in these districts to volunteer to be on jury rolls for inquests, Huyer said. The changes came about as a result of a time-limited regulation added to Ontario's Coroners Act.

The new regulation comes after a [committee](#), launched by the province to get more First Nations people on juries for inquests as well as civil and criminal cases, proposed the idea of aboriginal volunteers for inquests.

Huyer said he can't confirm when the volunteer lists will be finalized, but said the hope is to have the major inquest that's been halted due to the jury representativeness issue — the so-called "7 Deaths inquest" — underway in late fall.

Some of the other delayed inquests in Kenora and Thunder Bay will be able to start before that time, he said.

Criminal trials in the districts continue to go forward, and aren't impacted by the new regulation that remains in effect until Dec. 31 2016.

The probe into the seven deaths was called after a [Star series detailed a lack of investigation](#) into the deaths of students who had to leave their remote reserves in northern Ontario to attend high school in Thunder Bay.

Since 2000, six young males have drowned in the waters leading to Lake Superior, and a female asphyxiated in an alleged alcohol-related incident. The dead are Reggie Bushie, Jethro Anderson, Jordan Wabasse, all 15 years old, along with Kyle Morriveau, 17, Curran Strang and Robyn Harper, both 18, and Paul Panacheese, 21.

Among the other 11 inquest subjects are Ronald Fagan, 21, of Edmonton, who died while in custody at the Thunder Bay jail on Sept. 27, 2007, and Christopher Coaster, 29, who died on Aug. 3, 2008, also while an inmate at the same jail.

“It’s been a lot of work, but I’m really satisfied we’ve worked very effectively to address and remedy an issue to help move these inquests forward,” Huyer said.

The result will be a traditional or regular roll of jurors, plus a volunteer list.

“We’re supplementing or making a composite list to reflect the population in those districts,” Huyer explained.

The coroner said the changes won’t guarantee there’ll be an aboriginal on the actual jury in the room when the inquests start. The coroner’s constable is responsible for pulling together the five-member panel, after screening for issues such as bias and relationship or professional connections to the persons who are the focus of the inquests.

But Huyer said the new regulation will be a tool for ensuring that the rolls jurors are chosen from are proportionately representative of the aboriginal populations in the Kenora and Thunder Bay districts.

Toronto lawyer Christa Big Canoe, director at Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto, which is representing family members of six of the seven youths, said she’s “neutral” on future outcomes, particularly in relation to the random selection for the jury panels.

“If it’s random, isn’t there potential to still exclude aboriginal jurors from the actual panels?” she said in an interview.

There are other outstanding questions and uncertainty, she added.

“How many people do you get on a list? How quickly? Theoretically (the rolls) are potentially more representative, but (are they) actually practically more representative?”

Big Canoe said that due to the delays, the families are in a “we’ll believe it when it happens” mindset when it comes to the inquests actually starting.

A community group will be the lead organization reaching out to aboriginals to gather lists of volunteers, Huyer said.

Low native representation on jury rolls — particularly in trials or inquests held in communities with large native populations, and where the victims or accused are native — has long been an issue of concern.

Ontario’s Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) system, the regular way names are gathered for jury rolls, misses on-reserve aboriginals because they live on federal land not subject to municipal taxation.

The Juries Act calls for a separate system to invite on-reserve natives to be on jury rolls, but this system has been blamed for failing to capture names of some natives.

There's also the problem of aboriginal distrust of the justice system.

But proponents who support having natives volunteer for inquests argue that these hearings are geared more to finding out how a person died, and aren't supposed to assign blame — unlike criminal trials.

The idea of having volunteer jurors for inquests was first put forward in 2013 by former Supreme Court justice Frank Iacobucci in his [landmark report](#), First Nations Representation on Ontario Juries.

Huyer delayed the 12 inquests after a trial set to start last April for Shaldon Wabason on charges of second-degree murder and breaking-and-entering was stayed for a year after a judge in the Superior Court of Justice in Thunder Bay ruled Wabason's Charter rights were breached because the Crown failed to make "reasonable efforts" to meet its obligations regarding First Nation representation on the jury list.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/03/04/new-ontario-regulation-paves-way-for-aboriginal-inquests-to-proceed.html>

Funding for aboriginal justice program will continue despite budget concerns

By [Quinn Campbell](#) Videographer Global News, March 4, 2015 7:50 pm



STANDOFF, AB – Despite the looming economic downturn in the province, the federal government has pledged more than \$641,000 to maintain the Kainai Peacemaking Program, an alternative to the mainstream justice system for less serious crimes.

Macleod MP John Barlow says the funding will give the program stability.

“It’s difficult to make plans and adjustments to the program when you really don’t know where you’re going to be year to year,” said Barlow. “I’m proud to say we have made a three year commitment to this program.”

The Kainai Peacemaking Program started in 2008, using traditional Blackfoot practices taught by elders, something Blood Tribe Chief Charles Weasel Head says is key to his members.

“The high degree of our people that are in the jail system that are incarcerated is not acceptable anymore. An individual who is grounded in their culture and their history has a better opportunity to succeed.”

The program is used for criminal, civil and family law issues along with internal disputes among community members, both on and off the reserve. So far it has had an 82 percent success rate for completing the program.

“The advisors and the elders are the ones dealing with this every single day, they have told us these programs work and that this is an avenue we need to be supporting,” added Barlow.

Elder Frank Weasel Head has worked with the program from day one and says the impact it has on tribe members is long lasting.

“Some of these clients have come to me and said thank you, it meant something to them and it showed them that people care for them,” he said.

Through the 2014 economic action plan, the government has committed over \$22 million dollars to the Aboriginal Justice Strategy and has added an additional \$11 million for 2016-2017.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1864582/funding-for-aboriginal-justice-program-will-continue-despite-budget-concerns/>

Aboriginal woman's charges dropped after racist slur triggers brawl

Desiree Rockhill said she was shocked and insulted by a racist comment from a group of women

[CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 05, 2015 4:28 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 05, 2015 4:28 PM CT



Desiree Rockhill said she was shocked and insulted by a racist comment from a group of women in an Altona bar bathroom on Aug. 25, 2012. (Facebook)

Assault charges have been dropped against an aboriginal women for a bar-room brawl that was triggered by a racist slur. Desiree Rockhill was acquitted of assault and assault causing bodily harm.

Rockhill said she's relieved. "I wasn't going to plead guilty to something that I felt I wasn't just at fault for. I did admit in trial that I was the one who initiated the shove but from then on it was a mutual fight. But according to the victim, I blatantly for no reason attacked her."

Rockhill testified the fight started in the bathroom. Rockhill's friend accused one of four women of not flushing the toilet. That's when the pair heard someone say "I know how to flush a toilet, you dirty, Native c---."

Rockhill was shocked by the words, "It was upsetting of course. For someone to bluntly openly say something like that to somebody was ignorant. It was rude. Like, I know it goes on everywhere but it has never been said to me."

Rockhill said she and her friend approached the group of women at the bar. Rockhill testified the victim, Julia Neufeld, stepped forward as the one who made the racist comment.

Judge Cynthia Devine wrote in her decision, "Ms. Neufeld came forward and boldly accepted responsibility for it, and in her words, tone and body language, challenged Ms. Rockhill to fight. In effect, she was saying, "What are you going to do about it?"

Devine ruled because the fight was consensual, an assault charge couldn't be laid. Devine also said she had difficulty believing the victim's testimony, pointing out Neufeld's story differed from what she told police. Neufeld denied making the racist comment.

"Ms. Neufeld's evidence that she had just said she flushed the toilet is not plausible in light of Ms. Rockhill's behaviour and words when she came out of the bathroom. She was not looking for the woman who said she flushed the toilet; she was looking for the woman who made a derogatory, racist slur."

Witnesses said during the fight, name calling and hair-pulling came from both sides. The Crown was seeking the assault causing bodily harm charge because Neufeld now has a permanent bald spot, but Devine ruled the Crown had not proven Rockhill intended to cause serious harm.

Rockhill said she had never been in a fight before but felt she had to stand up against the racist slur. She's happy it's over.

"It's been a long two and a half years and I can finally move forward."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/aboriginal-woman-s-charges-dropped-after-racist-slur-triggers-brawl-1.2983239>

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Teach For Canada: De- or re-colonizing Indigenous communities in Canada?

By
[Tobey Steeves](#)
| March 2, 2015



As instruments for advancing democratic values, Canada's public schools have an ambiguous legacy. Over the years, many exclusionary and colonialist policies have been challenged, and this shift in cultural values has inspired policies to help make public schools in Canada more diverse and accessible.

It is less apparent, however, that public schools in Canada have come to grips with the historical impacts, and ongoing threats, of colonialism. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has [said](#) Canada has no colonial history, but a more honest evaluation of the real situation

would begin by acknowledging that "[First Nations people in Canada continue to suffer from the onslaught of colonization](#)."

Colonialism can be understood as an exploitative relationship of power that, as Asante explains, "seeks to impose the will of one people on another and to use the resources of the imposed people for the benefit of the imposer." While some forms of colonialism accomplish this with force, others use *soft* forms of coercion, which can be masked by platitudes, and where interactions have the semblance of common -- if not good -- sense.

Teach For Canada (TFC), a plan to recruit and train teachers from university faculties of education, and to place them in high-need rural classrooms across Canada, provides an example of where progressive (faux-gressive?) language is being used to promote a program that will reproduce Canada's historical colonial legacy in First Nations communities.

TFC Co-founders Kyle Hill and Adam Goldenberg say they launched Teach for Canada to "reduce the disparity in Canada's education outcomes," which they blame on an inability to recruit and retain teachers in rural and Aboriginal communities. In December 2014, their [website](#) described the project as driven by humility, collaboration, and transparency, and grounded in community values and respect for teachers' expertise:

These Teach For Canada teachers will join us in the summer before they begin teaching for an intensive, community-focused preparation program, designed and led by education experts, master teachers, school and community leaders, and elders. Among many other topics, Teach For Canada teachers will study the histories and cultures of the communities in which they will serve, and they will learn decolonizing and anti-racist pedagogies that can be used in the classroom. Once they begin teaching, local mentors and master teachers will provide our teachers with constant support to ensure that they continue to succeed in the classroom and community.

Hill and Goldenberg intend to kick off a national [campaign](#) at university faculties of education across Canada in early 2015 to recruit, train, and place new teachers in select schools in northern Ontario. Their [ambitious](#) "long-term dream" for TFC is to have its fellows "at a Cabinet table, sitting in newsrooms, sitting in boardrooms on Bay Street."

Although Hill and Goldenberg have limited experience as educators (Goldenberg spent a summer as a volunteer teacher in Iqaluit, Nunavut, and Hill volunteered to teach in Jamaica and Ukraine) they have been networking and [organizing](#) since 2011. Hill previously worked as a strategy consultant and project leader for Boston Consulting Group (BCG), one of the largest private companies in the United States, and one of the world's largest management consultancies. BCG has a "[clear agenda linked to corporate education reform](#)," and is behind efforts in several states to "close public schools and open semi-private charters; eliminate collective bargaining rights; introduce merit-pay schemes; heavily promote online learning." Goldenberg, with degrees from Yale and Harvard, worked as a speechwriter and political advisor for Canada's Liberal Party.

Hill and Goldenberg named Mark Podlasly, a member of the Nlaka'pamux First Nation, as chair of the TFC board. Podlasly previously worked as a political adviser for Canada's Liberal Party, and ran an executive education consulting practice that provided educational services for multinational corporations like General Electric and Goldman Sachs. Podlasly currently also serves as a senior adviser on British Columbia's First Nations Energy and Mining Council. Combined with his TFC position, this gives Podlasly the opportunity to merge interests in education and resource extraction while leading workshops titled "[LNG 101](#)." It is worth noting that Podlasly has been [described](#) as "battling Aboriginal tradition," pushing Aboriginals to overcome tradition and land-based politics in order to realize "economic development as quickly as possible."

Credible problems and a questionable plan

Teach For Canada's basic [premise](#) is that Aboriginal and rural communities in Canada lack access to excellent teachers. From here, TFC assumes that a scheme for reinforcing the supply of teachers will have positive impacts on teacher attrition and education outcomes. Both assumptions are dubious, and possibly dangerous.

[Studies](#) indicate between 25 per cent and 50 per cent of teachers leave the profession within five years on the job, and that much of this attrition can be linked to inadequate preparation, difficult working conditions, and professional isolation. Within this frame, the TFC plan could actually inhibit the realization of a "stable and well-educated teaching profession." For example:

- Teach For Canada plans to recruit newly credentialed teachers, and the aim is to place them in some of the most demanding classrooms across Canada.
- The Teach for Canada plan to recruit and place teachers in classrooms across Canada does not address the need for or value of locally sourced, homegrown educators.
- Teach for Canada's plan to increase the supply of teachers should not be mistaken as an attempt to improve the working conditions of teachers.
- Teach For Canada's plan to place new teachers into remote communities is analogous with "teaching as tourism," and may even normalize (or aggravate) professional isolation among teachers in remote communities.

As [Joe Bower](#) suggests, TFC is "at best unhelpful and at worst harmful" because it misidentifies the problem (teacher supply vs. teacher attrition) and employs solutions that ignore and exacerbate the factors that drive teacher turnover.

Furthermore, while TFC may funnel more teachers into rural and Aboriginal schools across Canada, these teachers cannot be expected to overcome the deep and pervasive social and structural inequalities that provide the basis (justification?) for TFC's intervention. After all, as [David Berliner](#) (and many others) argues, "as wonderful as

some teachers and schools are, most cannot eliminate inequalities that have their roots outside their doors and that influence events within them."

It is not apparent that a plan for increasing the supply of teachers will have a positive impact on the attrition of teachers or improve unequal education outcomes. On the other hand, empirical findings suggest that Teach For Canada's focus on the recruitment and placement of new teachers may actually increase teacher turnover in high-need classrooms.

Corporate beneficence and private proceeds

Teach For Canada may be grounded in dubious assumptions, but it has the means to push its way into schools across the country thanks to years of behind-the-scenes work. The support of corporate and private donors has been key.

After an [unsuccessful](#) bid for funding through [Pepsi](#), TFC secured the support of Torys LLP, an international corporate law firm that focuses on mergers, acquisitions and corporate finance. TFC has enjoyed years of pro bono support from Torys, including office space and equipment, legal advice, etc. The firm's Toronto offices were the site of TFC's official launch in November 2013.

Hill and Goldenberg continued to draw on the support of private and corporate donors as their project moved forward. [American Eagle Outfitters](#), for instance, donated 100 per cent of the proceeds from their holiday gift box sales to Teach For Canada. Another fundraising [campaign](#) saw every donation (up to \$100,000) matched by an unnamed private donor.

Taken in sum, Teach For Canada can aptly be read as an attempt to translate educational and social inequalities (public needs) into targets of a "[benevolent, yet colonizing, pedagogy of care](#)." Furthermore, owing to the fact that TFC arises from and depends upon the legacy of colonialism in Canada, this reliance on corporate and private funding indicates an agenda that is inextricable from both colonialism and corporatism.

Canadian educators respond... and resist

If colonialism is understood as an exploitative relationship that "seeks to impose the will of one people on another and to use the resources of the imposed people for the benefit of the imposer," then Teach For Canada can and should be recognized as a colonialist intervention. With flowery rhetoric and a velvet glove, the project imposes the will of privileged political insiders and corporatists onto educators, students, and communities whose resources become a vehicle for advancing TFC's objectives and privatization.

In other words, Teach For Canada leverages communities with legitimate needs while foreclosing the possibility of realizing public solutions to public problems. At the same time, it will need to overcome strong opposition in order to gain a foothold in schools.

The Canadian Teachers' Federation, which has been monitoring Teach For Canada, argues in a [policy brief](#) that the plan: i) "rests on the presumption that well-meaning individuals from outside can come in to school systems and fix all that is not working;" ii) "fails to recognize the hard work already being done by governments, teachers, school boards and communities to improve educational experiences and outcomes for all students;" iv) "makes fallacious presumptions about how to best serve Aboriginal communities;" and v) "is part of a larger agenda that aims to dismantle and privatize public services including public education."

Similarly, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation unanimously passed [motions](#) raised by two locals to oppose Teach For Canada, which it feels represents a systematic attempt "to exploit the vulnerabilities of Aboriginal children ... and privatize the functions of a free, quality, public education system."

Looking forward: Inoculation or infection?

The chilly reception from educators has not impeded Teach For Canada. In late 2014, TFC took applications for a director of teacher recruitment, director of teacher selection and support, director of community engagement, and director of teacher development to manage and co-ordinate the Canada-wide rollout.

Promotional [material](#) for this nationwide recruitment drive -- "coming to a campus near you" -- graphically illustrates the values beneath TFC's philanthropy. In one flyer a single female, warmly bundled, looks out into the distance, evoking a corporate myth in which a lone teacher, an entrepreneurial hero, parachutes into the wilderness to save the day.

At a minimum, this recruitment drive ought to be recognized as a culturally insensitive scheme that obscures the expertise of teachers (and democratic values) beneath a corporate and colonialist fantasy.

In the final analysis, those who identify with the struggle for a more democratic and equitable vision of public education in Canada have grounds for resisting Teach For Canada. Steps must be taken to engage with communities in a critical dialogue about the factors driving teacher attrition and educational inequalities. Policy-makers must be informed and encouraged to pass policies that support and value communities, not corporations and colonialists.

Post-secondary institutions must take steps to resist the corporatization of new educators and actively contribute to an educational dialogue about the need for public solutions to public problems. Aboriginal and remote communities across Canada can take steps to build bridges with teachers' unions and support their attempts to make public education in Canada more accessible and equitable. Teachers' unions, for their part, need to "adopt a new critical understanding of history," in the words of Mills and McCreary, and actively network with Aboriginal and remote communities across Canada to provoke a Canada-wide dialogue about public schools as vehicles for democratic values.

Tobey Steeves is a secondary teacher and education policy analyst in B.C. His research focuses on the intersections of education policies and the lives and work of teachers. Tobey blogs at <http://www.remappingedu.com> and can be found on Twitter at [@symphily](#).

A longer version of this commentary, with references, appears in the winter 2015 issue of [Our Schools / Our Selves](#).

Direct Link: <http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/behind-numbers/2015/03/teach-canada-de-or-re-colonizing-indigenous-communities-canada>

Mi'kmaq, province to ensure treaty knowledge reaches all

[THE CHRONICLE HERALD](#)

Published March 2, 2015 - 9:02pm

Last Updated March 3, 2015 - 6:39am



Malaysia Sappier of Membertou dances at a powwow in September. The Education Department and Mi'kmaq representatives are meeting in Membertou over the next two days to discuss ways to include information on aboriginal treaties in the public school system. (STAFF)

MEMBERTOU — Students in Nova Scotia need to learn more about aboriginal treaties in school, and it's not just the non-aboriginal population that needs a better education on that topic, says Basil Johnson of Potlotek First Nation.

"It would be great to start it, even at the entry level, just to teach the basic, general understanding that, yes, there's First Nations, and they're here in Canada," he said.

"Not as a past tense, but current."

Johnson, a Chapel Island resident and the Strait regional school board's aboriginal representative, said not all Mi'kmaq people know their own history or the ramifications of having treaty rights.

Apart from what they are taught at home or in the community, aboriginal young people need to learn about the treaties, along with the rest of society, he said.

“This past Treaty Day, I had a father come up to me, from the (aboriginal) community itself, and say, ‘Oh my God, I can’t believe it. My son came up to me today and said he met an Indian,’” said Johnson.

“I said ‘What? Oh my God, you’re Indian. We live on the reserve.’

“How did he not know this? It just took me back. There’s something missing, even here in the community.”

Officials with the Education Department and the aboriginal community in Nova Scotia are meeting Tuesday and Wednesday at the Membertou Heritage Centre to discuss ways to include treaty education in the P-to-12 school curriculum.

The workshop is part of Education Minister Karen Casey’s commitment in the recent Action Plan for Education to add treaty knowledge to the school curriculum over the next five years.

Johnson said many people don’t realize the Mi’kmaq did not give up land ownership under the Peace and Friendship Treaties signed in the 1700s. Instead, he said, they agreed to share the land and resources with non-aboriginal settlers.

Teaching all students in the province about the treaties and their significance will help everyone learn to get along better, he said.

“It’s a great first step to move toward having our country, rather than tolerate, understand our people and the relationship with Canada and the provinces,” said Johnson.

Jaime Battiste, an education committee member of the Mi’kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum, which is negotiating implementation of Mi’kmaq rights with the federal and provincial governments, said Eskasoni Chief Leroy Denny, a graduate of St. Francois Xavier’s bachelor of education program, has led the effort to have treaties taught in schools.

The two-day workshop will begin the process of figuring out how to get treaty education into the provincial school system, said Battiste.

“We’re talking not just for Mi’kmaq, but for all people across Nova Scotia to have a better understanding of treaty education and the treaty relationship between Mi’kmaq people and Nova Scotians.”

The workshop will include presentations by aboriginal experts in Nova Scotia and from Saskatchewan’s Office of the Treaty Commissioner, which won an award from the Canadian Race Relations Foundation last year for its work on treaty education.

Direct Link: <http://thechronicleherald.ca/novascotia/1272251-mikmaq-province-to-ensure-treaty-knowledge-reaches-all>

FNMI programs making a difference

By Submitted Article on March 4, 2015.

As has been emphasized and articulated since the inception of “Eye on Education,” school jurisdictions continually reflect on visible outcomes in the present and envision the future when examining the effectiveness of different programs and services designed to support student success.

Ranging from the board establishing priorities to the actualization of priorities by committed staff members in the schools, attention is given to how we can do things better. Doing things better can be measured in a variety of ways with consideration given to making a difference to one student at a time, a group of students, or all students. Having the recent opportunity to review more deeply our FNMI (First Nations, Metis, Inuit) program, I was reminded that we are sometimes remiss in not recognizing, sharing and celebrating examples of programs that successfully support students.

Alberta Education Goal #2, “Success for Every Student,” includes a focus on the implementation of strategies at the school jurisdiction level to meet the outcome of closing the achievement gap between FNMI students and all other students. School jurisdictions across the province collaborate to share best practice and examine programs and strategies that are making a difference. With approximately 800 FNMI students enrolled with Lethbridge School District No. 51, we have experienced an increase in numbers of students and been responsive by structuring opportunities that support student success and celebrate pride in diversity.

To enhance cultural understanding, numerous activities occur in all schools throughout the school year. More than 200 classroom presentations have been made by First Nations, Metis and Inuit Home/School Liaisons and the District FNMI Lead Teacher with the support of classroom teachers. As elders play a key role in the Aboriginal community, more than 50 elders have offered their wisdom and dedicated their time in schools. Their participation is highly valued and appreciated. Other cultural activities include: a yearly powwow hosted by an elder, traditional games, residential schools presentations, Blackfoot language, Aboriginal literature, and mentoring. An FNMI Advisory Council with parent and student voice guides program decisions.

A focus on supporting student academic achievement in a variety of ways is showing results. The district is proud to report that 81 per cent of high school students who wrote the provincial diploma exams achieved the acceptable standard and 8.7 per cent achieved the standard of excellence. Over the past four years, FNMI student results on Provincial Achievement Tests have increased in six of eight subjects. An exciting initiative targeting secondary level students is a Career Quest Program supported by Community Futures

Treaty 7 that provides career development activities for students in all district high schools.

It is important to note that the examples of programs and services highlighted here is representative of the work of one jurisdiction. Other jurisdictions have a myriad of programs and services that are committed to FNMI student success. School jurisdictions collaborate, share and build on the best practice of each other. Thank you to the committed staff, community members and family who continually reflect on how we can improve programs. I have had the privilege of listening to anecdotes about how individual lives have been impacted, and I know that many positive futures are in the making. There can be no better measure than making a difference to students, whether it is collective or one student at a time.

Cheryl Gilmore is the superintendent of Lethbridge School District No. 51.

Direct Link: <http://lethbridgeherald.com/news/local-news/2015/03/04/fnmi-programs-making-a-difference/>

Data leading charge to improve aboriginal education

By Austin M. Davis, Leader-Post March 5, 2015



Sarah Longman, Regina Board of Education supervisor of aboriginal education in Regina on March 4, 2015. Longman wants to improve aboriginal graduation rates within the division.

REGINA — Regina Public Schools is striving to increase the graduation rates of aboriginal students, but a massive gap still exists in the division.

“We’re really working with a larger portion of our student body who have been marginalized within an education system for such a long time,” Sarah Longman, the division’s supervisor of aboriginal education, said Tuesday night.

In the 2012-13 school year, the percentage of First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) students graduating on-time was 46.5 per cent — higher than the provincial FNMI student average of 40.3 per cent. For non-FNMI students, the division’s on-time graduation rate was 76.9 per cent in 2012-13.

The percentage of aboriginal students within the division graduating on-time has doubled since 2008-09.

Longman and Greg Enion, deputy director of student achievement, provided the Regina Board of Education with an update on the FNMI Achievement Initiative at the meeting. Part of the program was the first-ever school division-wide treaty training professional development day, attended by more than 1,600 staff members in August.

Longman believes data collection is taking Regina Public Schools in the right direction, starting with the increased number of students who self-declare as First Nations, Metis or Inuit.

“This is our way of trying to deal with and clean up and do what’s right for our students in our division,” she said.

She said it’s “baseline data” that informs the division about who it is they’re serving, who needs support and where they’re located. The self-declaration process was vetted by elders and legal personnel.

Longman said during her presentation that teachers are feeling more comfortable having the conversation about self-declaration with students’ families.

She said the data is showing many areas of success and allows for planning of direct programming for those students.

“We are finding that our students are at much higher levels than people say. It’s helping us to, in some cases, validate some of the ideas that we had. It’s also helping us bust apart some misconceptions that were out there,” Longman said.

She said there was surprise about the large size of the Metis population, a group that she described as “invisible in some ways,” that had fallen off the radar. She received phone calls from school administrators who had no idea about the number of FNMI in their own schools.

Longman said the division is working to improve the literacy of FNMI students by certain grade levels.

“We know that if we don’t get them by Grade 3 there’s going to be a whole other bunch of problems that are going to come after that,” she said. “We’re really working hard that we’re pinpointing this primary end, putting our resources there because that’s where our data’s directing us.”

One of the division’s enduring strategies is to ensure FNMI students have outcomes that are equitable compared to all students, through appropriate instructional strategies and appropriate supports. By 2017, the division intends to reduce the gap between performance of FNMI students and all Regina Public Schools students by 10 per cent on all measures of achievement, including graduation.

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/life/Data+leading+charge+improve+aboriginal+education/10861925/story.html>

First Nation education addressed



Ministry of Education representative Sarah Cormode (left), Big Brothers and Big Sisters representative Melissa Newberry, RCMP Corp. Eric Chrona, RCMP Sgt. Kevin Neufeld, 2014 First Nations Role Model Mountainlake Alphonse and SD 27 Trustee Joyce Cooper were among the First Nations conference participants.

by [Gaeil Farrar - Williams Lake Tribune](#)

posted Mar 5, 2015 at 2:00 PM

School District 27 is one of five school districts in B.C. selected to help develop a new Ministry of Education provincial curriculum guide for First Nations students.

More than 80 representatives from School District 27 board and staff, First Nation leaders, Cariboo Regional District, Williams Lake City Council, RCMP, Ministry of Education and others participated in a conference toward that goal held at the Signal Point convention centre, Monday.

During the afternoon portion of the convention, facilitator Kaleb Child asked the group to focus on positive actions that could be implemented to improve education for First Nations and all students.

Child is the School District 85 District Principal First Nations Programs and is facilitating the five provincial conferences on behalf of the Ministry of Education.

The first conference was held in Tsaxis (Fort Rupert) on Feb. 4.

The others will be held in Burnaby, Cranbrook, and Kelowna.

He said the vision for the conferences is to further define Aboriginal perspectives and world-views in the classroom, strategize further engagement opportunities for all learners and to explore regional examples of excellence.

In addition to raising the profile of the changes coming to the BC curriculum, Child said one of the primary outcomes of the five sessions will be to produce a comprehensive teacher's guide that will identify common themes for educational practice.

He said the publication will also build on the relationships between communities and schools to ensure teachers are well equipped to respond to the expectation of incorporating local First Nations perspectives into classrooms for all students.

He said School District 27 was chosen for participation in this review process because it has already adopted a number of innovative programs to inspire and encourage First Nation students in learning.

Direct Link: <http://www.wltribune.com/news/295243471.html>

Aboriginal Health

Bringing aboriginal culture to Western medicine

By Andrea Hill, The Starphoenix February 27, 2015

After two years attending the University of Toronto's doctor of pharmacy program, Jaris Swidrovich fell in love with the big city.

Upon receiving his degree, however, the 28-yearold Saskatoon native, who hails from Yellow Quill First Nation, returned home.

"I would go back to Toronto in a heartbeat, but I know I wouldn't have the same face-time with the aboriginal community as I do here. And I know that's my calling," Swidrovich said from the spiritual care room on the fifth floor of St. Paul's Hospital, where he works as a clinical pharmacist.

Swidrovich, who graduated from the U of T program in the spring of 2013, is the first aboriginal Canadian to achieve a doctor of pharmacy degree. It's a source of great pride for himself, his family and his band.

"I'm kind of the next generation out of a whole history of unfortunate events," Swidrovich said.

He explained that his grandmother and great-grandmother endured time in residential schools and his mother was taken from her family and placed in non-aboriginal foster homes.

"It makes me very proud to know that my family went from where we were to what we're seeing today," he said.

When Swidrovich started his post-secondary journey at the University of Saskatchewan almost a decade ago, he said he was "disconnected" from his aboriginal heritage. That changed when he and his older sister volunteered at the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards - now the Indspire Awards - in Saskatoon.

"That was really the first time that I took note of my culture and my background; I couldn't believe how natural it felt participating in that event, everything from our pipe ceremonies to the round dances and any other traditional event that was part of that awards ceremony," Swidrovich said.

"I had this chemical reaction inside and I knew that was me. After then, I really started to ramp up my involvement in aboriginal culture and organizations because I felt that being right."

Upon graduating from the U of S bachelor of science in pharmacy program, Swidrovich worked with the Lung Association of Saskatchewan to develop teaching materials for kids about traditional use of tobacco and taught health care workers on and off Saskatchewan reserves about aboriginal tobacco use. The work was important to him because he'd seen first-hand how little some people knew about aboriginal culture, he said.

He recalled how his classmates laughed when a guest lecturer said it was common practice for people to give tobacco as a gift to aboriginal elders. "I felt the need to put up my hand and address the fact that tobacco is actually one of four sacred medicines in aboriginal cultures and it doesn't mean you're offering them a cigarette to smoke," Swidrovich said.

At the U of T, Swidrovich continued to stay connected to his aboriginal ancestry and arranged to do one of his rotations at Ile-ala- Crosse, about 500 kilometres northwest of Saskatoon.

"It was very eye-opening. ... I absolutely took note of how much the aboriginal and northern community could benefit from some clinical pharmacist services," he said, noting that most people coming into the health clinic had never sat down with someone to discuss their medications.

Swidrovich said he likes to tap into First Nations culture when explaining Western medicine, and this helps encourage some of his aboriginal patients to comply with taking medications. He grabs his lanyard and points to the medicine wheel pin he wears every day at work, which represents the four dimensions of health: physical, emotional, spiritual and mental. "Even if it works as nothing else than just a visual to people, First Nations people know what this is, and it's usually a nice sign to show that I know about this and I care about this," Swidrovich said.

At St. Paul's, Swidrovich said he spends his clinical hours working with patients with HIV, AIDs and addictions, 80 per cent of whom self-identify as aboriginal.

In the evenings and in his downtime, he works with numerous committees and organizations, including the City of Saskatoon's cultural diversity and race relations committee and the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists. He has travelled to Yellow Quill to speak at the band's reserve day and gives presentations about aboriginal history and the need for cultural sensitivity in the health care system.

Most recently, he's helped found a medication assessment clinic that runs out of the Westside Clinic one evening a week. This provides an opportunity for people to sit down with a pharmacist and talk about their medications. Swidrovich said a large number of people using the clinic - now in its third week - are aboriginal.

"This program is really opening up the opportunity for comprehensive pharmacy services for First Nations patients and also bringing it physically closer to many First Nations patients too, by coming right to 20th Street," he said. "I think it's quite exciting."

Direct Link:

<http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Bringing+aboriginal+culture+Western+medicine/10847201/story.html>

Aboriginal girl's parents explain daughter's death



Attendees react to the story of Makayla Sault, told by her parents Sonya and Ken at a forum to discuss recent cases of Indigenous girls who insisted on traditional methods of healing over western medicine at an aboriginal health conference organized by McMaster University in Hamilton on Thursday, February 26, 2015. THE CANADIAN PRESS/Aaron Lynett

by [Canadian Press - BC Local News](#)

posted Feb 26, 2015 at 2:58 PM— updated Feb 26, 2015 at 6:33 PM

By Liam Casey, The Canadian Press

HAMILTON - Chemotherapy took such a horrific toll on Makayla Sault's weak body that she begged her parents to take her out of treatment and try instead traditional medicine, the mother of the 11-year-old aboriginal girl said Thursday.

Makayla, who suffered from a rare form of leukemia, died last month after suffering a stroke — her death sparked a national conversation on aboriginal peoples' right to opt out of the health system.

Doctors gave her at most a 72-per-cent chance of survival even with an aggressive chemotherapy treatment, her mother, Sonya Sault, told an audience at McMaster University.

"She became so weak so she couldn't even stand or sit at times," she said.

Sault said the treatment took a heavy physical and emotional toll on the little girl.

"Are you sure I'm getting better? Are you sure we're doing the right thing? I feel I am getting worse," she recalled her daughter asking.

Makayla said things like "the chemo is going to kill me," the mother said, adding that finally she begged the parents to put an end to it.

"Mom, if you have the power to get me out of here, then you have to get me out of here."

Sault said she and her husband Ken thought about it.

"We know that chemotherapy is not easy for anyone, but for Makayla it was devastating," she said.

Makayla, she said, understood the "harsh reality of stopping chemotherapy," but she wanted to try traditional medicine.

"I don't care if I'm going to die, I don't want to die weak and sick in a hospital," Sault remembered her daughter telling her.

So they stopped treatment.

"We know that chemotherapy is not easy for anyone, but for Makayla it was devastating."

Makayla nearly died of septic shock just three weeks into her treatment last year, Sault said. And the girl suffered three other serious illnesses while receiving the treatment.

Sault spoke at an event organized by McMaster University's Indigenous Studies Program in an effort to understand the problems between First Nation peoples and the health-care system.

"Our hearts are broken by the passing of our daughter," an emotional Sault said before composing herself — her husband by her side.

The parents said they want their daughter to be remembered for more than cancer.

She was a dancer, gymnast and lacrosse player, Sault said, and was "wise beyond her years."

The mother also said she wanted to clarify "misinformation in the media" about her daughter's treatment.

The medical staff at McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton threatened to get the authorities to apprehend the girl and her two brothers and force chemotherapy treatment upon her, Sault said.

Makayla started to feel better once the chemotherapy stopped, Sault said, but she didn't stop treatment altogether. She continued to receive treatment from her family physician, Dr. Jason Zacks, as well as an oncologist at McMaster hospital. She also received traditional medicine from a healer near her home on the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation.

Then the family went to the Hippocrates Health Institute in Florida to get away from the brewing media storm over her case, Sault said.

Florida's Department of Health recently issued a cease-and-desist letter to the man who runs the spa, Brian Clement, for practising medicine without a license.

Sault said Makayla didn't go to the Florida spa for cancer treatment, only to try out a new diet that might boost her immune system. Plus, Sault said, Makayla got to relax and be a kid again, soaking up the sun and swimming in the ocean.

The mother of another cancer-stricken aboriginal girl who refused chemotherapy also spoke at the event. The case of her daughter, who cannot be named because of a court-ordered publication ban, made headlines after McMaster hospital took the local Children's Aid Society — and eventually the family — to court in an attempt to bring the girl back for chemotherapy treatment.

The court sided with the family, saying as a First Nation person, the girl has the right to choose her health-care procedures.

"The issue is not whether traditional medicine will be respected, but how it will be respected and how and when the two systems can work together," the mother said Thursday.

She promised to share her daughter's story with the public after the deadline for appeal of the court decision expires on March 13.

Direct Link: <http://www.thenorthernview.com/national/294252441.html>

National Post View: Ontario must not let a ruling endangering aboriginal children stand

[National Post View](#) | March 3, 2015 7:48 PM ET



It is sometimes difficult to balance modern medicine with parental autonomy. In the case of an unambiguous life-or-death decision, it is not.

In November, an Ontario judge ruled that parents who wished to withdraw their 11-year-old leukemia-afflicted daughter from chemotherapy in favour of “traditional” medicine could do so under the aegis of “aboriginal rights.” On Tuesday, the *National Post* reported the provincial government — thankfully — is considering appealing.

Judge Gethin Edward’s decision was ludicrous. It ignored the nature of the alternative medicine in question, notably non-aboriginal New Age quackery. It did not consider whether the right in question was being reasonably exercised. It seemed to miss the point entirely: J.J. and her parents were never denied access to aboriginal medicine; at issue was their wish to eschew modern treatment offering outstanding chances of success, thus inviting all-but-certain death. Indeed another 11-year-old aboriginal girl in a remarkably similar situation, Makayla Sault, has since passed away.

It is sometimes difficult to balance modern medicine with parental autonomy. In the case of an unambiguous life-or-death decision, it is not. And it is unconscionable that aboriginal children now enjoy lesser protection in this regard than non-aboriginal children. Many aboriginal leaders cheered Judge Edward’s ruling; politically, it would be much easier for the governing Liberals to let it stand. Easier, but untenable. It must be appealed.

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/03/03/national-post-view-ontario-must-not-let-a-ruling-endangering-aboriginal-children-stand/>

Aboriginal History

Cross represents lingering legacy of colonialism for many Anishinaabeg

By [Karl Hele](#)

Friday, February 27, 2015 4:46:29 EST PM



While those who erected the 37-metre illuminated cross near St. George's Avenue East in Sault Ste. Marie in 1962 might have meant well, many First Nations people believe it is a reminder of the claims of Empire over a continent and peoples by mere right of discovery.

GARDEN RIVER FIRST NATION - When looking across the river from Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., upon its Ontario twin, a large cross readily draws the eye.

This obvious symbol of Christian, specifically Catholic, presence in the Sault region was erected in 1962 as a labour of love by Mike Perepelyts, Mike Lukenda and Bill Taylor, to celebrate the completion of the Trans-Canada Highway through the Sault while honouring a French land claim from 1671. While the settler population of the Sault region may look with pride upon the cross, it is a reminder of the claims of Empire over a continent and peoples by mere right of discovery. When France surrendered its claims in North America to the British in 1763, and the British subsequently to the United States in 1783 and Canada in 1867, the pretension of sovereignty was passed along as well. For many Anishinaabeg, this cross represents an ongoing legacy of colonialism and subjugation.

Back in 1670 the Intendant of New France, Jean Talon, under the orders of King Louis XIV, decided to bolster French Imperial claims to the continent first made in 1534. The French believed that British claims to Rupert's Land in the north, firmly established in 1670 with the deeding of millions of acres to a corporation, the Hudson's Bay Co., and the growing English colonies to the south were a threat to French trade, claims, and alliances with First Nations. Hence, Daumont de Saint-Lusson was dispatched in October 1670 with orders to firmly plant French claims to the Great Lakes and Mississippi Valley while seeking out valuable copper mines. While over-wintering on Manitoulin Island, Saint-Lusson and his interpreter, Nicolas Perrot, began sending runners to as many indigenous people as they could locate. They asked all who were contact to spread the word about a great gathering to be held at the Sault with the French.

As the people assembled through the month of May, Saint-Lusson, Perrot, Jesuit priests, and traders all worked the assembled Indians. Many of those who had gathered along the rapids had done so not to listen to the priests or the King's representatives, but to fish, engage in ceremony, debate politics, plan for inevitable raids by the Haudenosaunee, and simply socialize after a long winter. The narratives surrounding the Saint-Lusson episode ignore this reality when celebrating the event. After all, if people were there to do what they had done for a millennium, the ceremony and importance of the event is diminished.

Apparently, when Saint-Lusson undertook his ceremony of possession on June 14, 1671, 14 separate Indigenous Nations were present. In various histories the exact identity of these Nations are not clarified beyond the Ottawa, Huron, and Dakota. It is interesting that the Anishinaabeg of the Sault remain missing in many published accounts. During the ceremony when Saint-Lusson claimed this vast region for France and the Catholic faith. First he erected a cross to symbolize the Christian faith and its intent to claim Indian souls for their God. Second, he erected a post with the Royal Coat of Arms attached to proclaim and mark Louis XIV's sovereignty in the claimed lands. Perrot and the Jesuit priests assured all who could read their chronicles that the Indians were impressed by the pageantry, fully understood the land claim being made, and dutifully swore obedience to the King. With the firing of muskets, three cheers, and the singing of the *Vexilla Regis*, the French felt assured that their claim to a vast territory and all of its peoples was legally and morally enacted. That evening, illuminated by a bonfire, a *Te Deum* was performed in honour of the Indians becoming "subjects" of the King of France.

The lands Saint-Lusson claimed 'that were or were not yet discovered' extended from James Bay to the Gulf of Mexico and the Rocky Mountains. Apparently, the assembled 14 Nations were able to consent to vast lands and peoples passing to French sovereignty. In reality, the fourteen Nations that had gathered there could only assent, if they did, for themselves. I would question the extent of the assent to becoming subjects of a foreign monarch. For First Nations the concept of 'father' is not one of strict rule or a patriarchal like the figure from Europe; instead, an Anishinaabeg father figure is generally the exact opposite. We viewed fathers as being incapable of properly instructing and chastising their off-spring since it was actually the uncles' or aunts' responsibility. Ideas of 'subject' and 'ownership' of lands by a single entity were also unheard of. Perrot and the Jesuits many people were likely not as fluent in various or every Aboriginal language, as is often contended. Hence, the entire notion that there was consent to becoming subjects of France was a convenient fiction to bolster the European land claim. I suspect that the assembled Nations did agree that the French King would 'look after them', meaning for example that he would provide presents, plentiful trade goods, and assistance in war, as well as behaving as an ally in all aspects of the Indigenous concept. Nevertheless, the chroniclers in 1671 and subsequently, never bothered to seek the Indigenous understanding of the event.

The exact location of the cross has been subject to much speculation, albeit everyone seems to agree it was located on the North Shore of the St. Mary's River overlooking the entrance to Lake Superior. The original cross may have been found by canal workers

making the first lock on the American side in the early 1850s. There is a vague reference to rotting logs in the shape of a cross at the foot of the rapids. The pretensions of Saint-Lusson and other French figures to have the right to claim a continent already occupied by functioning sovereign societies led to the erection of Cartier's cross in 1534, Saint-Lusson's in 1670, as well as others along the Gulf of Mexico, among the Dakotas, and in Montreal. These creative imperial fictions have been carried on through the continued imposition of Canadian and American claims to sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and their lands, and is immortalized by the actions of well meaning individuals in 1962 when re-erecting a symbol of colonial and religious domination. There are two histories for the cross in the Sault: one preferred by the settlers, and a lesser known even hidden history, held by the Anishinaabeg.

Perhaps the story I was told as a child is true — that once Saint-Lusson and his party left the Sault, the assembled 14 Nations tore the cross, post, and coat-of-arms down and tossed them in the river. They had not agreed to become subjects, and physically rejected the claims of France to their lands and waters. In effect denying the western-centric doctrine of discovery.

Karl S. Hele is an associate professor at Concordia University. He grew up north of Sault Ste. Marie and attended White Pines and Algoma University. His doctorate, from McGill University in 2003, examined the Anishinaabe/missionary interaction in the Sault. His current work continues to explore the dynamics of the region's history. He is also a member of Garden River First Nation. karl.hele@bell.net

Direct Link: <http://www.saultstar.com/2015/02/27/cross-represents-lingering-legacy-of-colonialism-for-many-anishinaabeg>

We Stand Together shines light on Aboriginal history

[tahirih.faroozan](#) Feb 28, 2015 02:56:12 PM

A national campaign, We Stand Together, is aiming to educate Canadian students about Aboriginal history.

The initiative run by Free The Children, hopes to gain more popularity.

The lessons will cover First Nation's history and current issues.

"We're working really closely with MEI to incorporate more Aboriginal voice and genuine dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students," said Liz Arkaya, the youth and educational programming manager. "Next year we're hoping that all the content will be coming from Aboriginal sources, so that it's authentic and genuine."

Arkaya added the discussions held in Ottawa Friday on missing and murdered Aboriginal women, is an important topic for older students.

We Stand Together runs until March 6th.

Direct Link: <http://www.660news.com/2015/02/28/we-stand-together-shines-light-on-aboriginal-history/>

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

First Nation woman calls Air Transat's kids activity package racist

Children's activity package on flight features red-skinned creature in feather headdress

By Tim Fontaine, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 27, 2015 4:00 AM CT Last Updated: Feb 27, 2015 8:48 PM CT

A First Nations woman says a vacation airline should stop handing out a children's activity package that features a red-skinned cartoon character wearing a feathered headdress.



Maria Morrison was shocked to find these images in an activity package given to her daughter on a recent Air Transat flight. (Maria Morrison)

Maria Morrison says she and her 12-year-old daughter were returning to Winnipeg on a Feb. 24 Air Transat flight, following a vacation in the Dominican Republic.

As they were boarding the plane, an attendant gave her daughter an activity package.

"We opened up the package and this hideous character was there, in a few different places," Morrison said.

"My daughter gasped when she saw it."

The books and stickers in the package also contained images of canoes, teepees, and tomahawks, Morrison said.

Morrison kept the activity package and tweeted images of it when she returned home, with the message, "Huge FAIL @airtransat Please pull your racist kids material from all flights! #NotaMascot"

The company tweeted this response, "Sorry to read it offended you. I will forward your comments to the appropriate teams. Thanks."

Morrison said she hasn't heard anything else from Air Transat and is mulling how to move forward.

In an email sent Friday afternoon, an Air Transat spokesperson told Morrison that no one else has complained about the game in question.

"As an international travel company, we cherish diversity, promote culture and heritage, and strive to do this while avoiding clichés and stereotypes. The image discussed here is just one out of many taken from a game designed to entertain small children, and the same touch of humour is applied to a series of characters, including an RCMP officer," the email states in part.

"This game has been available on our aircraft for years and has never elicited comments before. It was certainly not meant to be disrespectful to the many communities represented."

The spokesperson said the airline is sorry if Morrison was offended by the material and added, "We would have been pleased to discuss this issue with you before it was addressed to the media."

Morrison said she and her daughter are offended by the cartoon and they want the airline to remove it immediately.

"I felt compelled to do something about it because of the blatant cultural appropriation, the inappropriateness of it and the disrespect that was being shown by this," Morrison said.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/first-nation-woman-calls-air-transat-s-kids-activity-package-racist-1.2974483>

Photos: Healing After a Century of Discrimination in Canada

Daniella Zalcman photographed the struggles—and healing—of indigenous Canadians battling HIV, addiction, and the legacy left by now-defunct Indian residential schools

By
Chelsea Matiash
March 1, 2015 10:27 p.m. ET

A dream catcher adorns a bedroom window in the home of Doreen Bellaire, serving as an affirmation of her indigenous heritage. But in another room of her home on the Nipissing First Nation reserve in Ontario, Canada, she displays an Asian conical hat—purchased by the family when they believed they might be of Asian decent. For Ms. Bellaire, it is a reminder of the decadeslong journey to discover her roots.

Ms. Bellaire's mother was one of thousands of aboriginal children removed from their homes by the Canadian government to be educated and boarded at a network of special schools intended to assimilate them.

After 10 years at one of the schools, her mother abandoned her reserve and moved into town to protect her children from being subjected to the same experience. For decades, Ms. Bellaire's mother wouldn't reveal their background, leaving her and her family to question their ethnicity.



Doreen Bellaire at her home on Lake Nipissing in November. Photo: Daniella Zalcman

Ms. Bellaire's story isn't unique, photojournalist Daniella Zalcman discovered after meeting Ms. Bellaire and other native Canadians in her recent pursuit of a public-health story.

Attending the AIDS 2014 conference, Ms. Zalcman discovered that indigenous populations were heavily represented as victims of the disease. Research confirmed that HIV was disproportionately prevalent in Canada's indigenous First Nation populations. With the support of a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, she traveled to Canada.

"I am fascinated by the modern relationships between former colonizers and their territories, either in the echoes of outmoded legislation, as with Uganda's antihomosexuality laws, or with the ongoing tools of systematic oppression, as in Canada," Ms. Zalcman said.

Her encounters with local residents and organizations led her to Ms. Bellaire, and her discovery of the special Indian residential school system for indigenous people. In Regina, Saskatchewan, she met Eleanor Kay, an HIV-positive drug user whose parents attended the schools. She began to research the school system, and whether it had any connection to the pervasiveness of the virus in its students and their families.

Although there isn't enough research to support a scientific correlation, some research studies, Ms. Zalcman's subjects, and the Canadian government itself suggest a tie between the schooling and subsequent social and health struggles.



Eleanor Kay prepares a syringe of morphine for her friend Pucks. He said he has been on methadone maintenance treatment for more than a decade, but continues to use opioids as well. Photo: Daniella Zalcman

In a 2008 apology to the affected population, Canadian Prime Minister [Stephen Harper](#) acknowledged that the Indian residential schools program—which ended in 1996 after a century of operation—intended to “remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture.”

He said the system “contributed to social problems that continue to exist in many communities today.”

A study from the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health found that of those surveyed, nearly half of First Nation adults living on a reserve who attended the schools reported “a negative impact on their overall health and well-being.”

“[Ellie Kay] is one of the most fundamentally lost people I’ve ever met. She has such a huge heart...but her own habits are painfully self-destructive. She regularly forgets to take her antiretrovirals, she skips most meals. She doesn’t take care of herself in any conceivable way,” Ms. Zalcman said of the HIV-positive woman from Regina.

Although Ms. Zalcman set out to document a community suffering from HIV, what she said she ultimately found was a story of healing.



Ron Horsefall walks around Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside near his former residence. He said he was an addict and alcoholic for 23 years, and attended the Lebreton Indian Residential School. His mother attended a residential school as well. He was diagnosed as HIV-positive when he was 19, and failed to properly take his medication for years until it progressed to full-blown AIDS. He decided to get sober when he was 34.
Photo: Daniella Zalcman

“This is a story about the turning point in aboriginal Canadian identity—in spite of a history of forced assimilation and institutionalized abuse that has existed since contact, there is now a movement to revive centuries-old traditions,” Ms. Zalcman said. “And in turn, there’s a clear correlation between that reclamation of cultural identity and healing.”

Ms. Bellaire, the woman whose mother attended a residential school, told Ms. Zalcman that fellowship was key to reclaiming identity for First Nations people.

“When we get together and speak openly and honestly with each other, it keeps us connected. We didn’t have that when we were younger. We didn’t tell our own stories. How can you know your people if you don’t tell your stories?”



Rakiya and Kecia Larkin cuddle up before bedtime in Victoria, British Columbia. Kecia Larkin, 42, and her partner, David, are HIV-positive—they met on a dating site for positive people. She grew up in an abusive home in an isolated indigenous community, and both her parents and maternal grandmother attended residential school. Photo: Daniella Zalcman

Direct Link: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/photos-healing-after-a-century-of-discrimination-in-canada-1425266858>

“Tribal” Fashion Collection Angers Native Americans

A new Native American-inspired fashion line by Canadian fashion label Dsquared2 has been labeled the most racist collection of 2015 by social media audiences at Milan Fashion Week. Outraged social media users immediately bombarded Dsquared2’s Facebook, Instagram and Twitter account with angry comments.

Dsquared2’s designers, twin brothers Dean and Dan Caten, called this their #Dsquaw collection and used the racial slur in their official hashtag on Twitter and Instagram. On Facebook, the brand said their new collection combines “the enchantment of Canadian Indian tribes” with the “confident attitude of the British aristocracy.”

This backlash comes just weeks after the [New York Fashion week controversy](#), when Native American fashion designer Bethany Yellowtail accused London-based KTZ of appropriating her designs in their new Spring collection.

Some of the ongoing backlash comes directly a growing social media network of Native American fashion professionals, like Johnnie Jae, a partner at [Native Max Magazine](#). Native American designers and fashion critics are largely absent from the catwalk, and feel insulted by and excluded from the global industry profiting from “tribal” fashion trends.

Direct Link: <http://www.vocativ.com/usa/race/racial-fashion-tribal-collection-angers-native-americans/>

Winnipeg conference aims to change indigenous stereotypes

"Bridging the Gap" brings together indigenous and non-indigenous youth from across the country

By Jillian Taylor, [CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 05, 2015 1:20 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 05, 2015 1:24 PM CT



Angel Panag, from Halifax, and Joshua Kakegamic, from Thunder Bay, talk about their common experiences with racism.

Young people from across Canada are in Winnipeg working towards bridging the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

The three day conference is organized by Canada Roots Exchange.

"I think it's cool seeing new faces and seeing how it is back where they come from," said Grace Genaille, a Grade 12 student at Children of the Earth High School and one of 250 delegates at the event.

Genaille said she is looking forward to meeting others and learn about their experiences with stereotypes and racism.

"It's not a good feeling when you walk into a store and people look at you right away and think you have items in your pocket or follow you around the store," she said.

She hopes the conference will teach her ways to change people's views of aboriginal people.

The youth will hear from each other in panel discussions, listen to keynote speakers like Michael Champagne, founder of AYO! (Aboriginal Youth Opportunities) and take part in workshops.

"All of the workshops are led by youth," said Vibhor Garg, executive director of Canadian Roots Exchange. "We have things like looking at how do we break down stereotypes and create dialogue through spoken word and hip hop."

He said there also sessions are on parenting, indigenous history, deconstructing stereotypes and building bridges between newcomers and indigenous people.

Garg says the conference couldn't come at a better time, following the Maclean's magazine article that called [Winnipeg the most racist city in Canada](#).

Winnipeg's Mayor Brian Bowman welcomed the delegates and talked about how he is working to bridge the gap between the indigenous and non-indigenous population.

"People are people everywhere, doesn't matter if they are indigenous or not. We all want what is best for ourselves and for future generations," said Bowman.

While in Winnipeg, they will also visit the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Louis Riel's grave in St. Boniface.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/winnipeg-conference-aims-to-change-indigenous-stereotypes-1.2983123>

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

Aboriginal Canadians in engineering and geoscience

The Leader-Post February 28, 2015

Joely BigEagle-Kequahtoway, Engineerin-Training, is a distribution engineer at SaskEnergy.

She grew up in Regina and Saskatoon, but graduated from high school at the White Bear Education Complex. She obtained a mathematics degree from the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, now called the First Nations University of Canada, and went on to take civil engineering at the University of Calgary.

As a student and a single parent with three children, Joely faced many challenges while going to university, including putting food on the table. "I relied on food banks. There was one right on campus in Calgary that was a big help. With juggling my family and my studies, we had to live by a very regimented schedule every day."

Today, in addition to her career at SaskEnergy, Joely is a successful entrepreneur and co-manages her family business with her husband, Lorne Kequahtoway. Tatanka Boutique is an art gallery, clothing and jewelry retail space located in the Cathedral district in Regina. She is an active volunteer who has served on a long list of boards and committees.

Bryce Jardine-Pelletier's life is a microcosm of the challenges that many Aboriginal students face. He dropped out of high school in grade 11 and pursued a number of jobs.

"I didn't feel my life was really going anywhere. I had some struggles with drugs and alcohol, but when I was about 25, I took a hard look at where I was headed and decided I had to make a change," he said.

Jardine-Pelletier completed an adult General Equivalency Diploma and then decided that environmental engineering was a good fit for him.

He was accepted into the adult education program at the University of Regina in 1989 and was then accepted by the Faculty of Engineering in 1990. He convoked in 1994 and went straight to work on environmental engineering projects.

In May 2014, Jardine-Pelletier earned a Master of Engineering degree and, at the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists (APEGS) annual meeting, his team received the Environmental Achievement Award for their work on the Northgate Commodities Logistics Centre.

"I achieved all that and I'm one of the few engineers in the province who never officially finished high school," he said.

Matthew Dunn, P.Eng., is the inaugural Indigenous Peoples initiatives coordinator for the College of Engineering at the University of Saskatchewan.

Dunn, a mechanical engineer and member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, is no stranger to high ambitions. "What attracted me to engineering was that, when I was in high school, I wanted to become an astronaut. I read a pamphlet that said aerospace engineering was one career path into the space program. But then, when I got to college, one thing led to another and I ended up doing a master's in mechanical engineering and then working in the potash industry. It turned out that I shot for the stars, but ended up a kilometre underground instead."

Dunn said he did not experience any direct racism during his studies but encountered many "ignorant comments." "Being exposed to that sort of thing was very frustrating and

awkward, but it didn't hold me back. If anything, it just motivated me to excel even more."

It's that drive to excel and contribute to the Aboriginal community that led Dunn to accept the Indigenous Peoples initiatives coordinator job, which he has held since May.

The college's goal is to double Aboriginal enrolment by the 2016/2017 academic year. It's an aggressive target, but Dunn is confident that it can be done.

Direct Link:

<http://www.leaderpost.com/technology/Aboriginal+Canadians+engineering+geoscience/10851467/story.html>

Aboriginal Politics

First a vision, now a declaration: new talks on Nunavik self-government

"Self-government is one of the many future negotiations that will have to take place"

SARAH ROGERS, March 04, 2015 - 7:01 am



"Parnasimautik is saying: here we are; don't forget us," said KRG chair Maggie Emudluk Feb. 26.
(PHOTO BY SARAH ROGERS)

KUUJJUAQ — Nunavik's Parnasimautik report may be signed and complete, but the process of engaging Inuit in the region appears to have just begun.

Parnasimautik, or Plan Nunavik, is the result of years of consultation across the region to develop a blueprint for the region's future.

The [report](#), signed last fall, set out clear priorities for Nunavik's leadership, from the need to protect and promote the Inuit language and culture, to identifying clear terms for allowing resource development in the region.

The next step is drafting a declaration in time for Makivik Corp.'s annual general meeting at the end of March, Kativik Regional Government chair Maggie Emudluk told council meetings in Kuujuaq last week.

"This declaration describes who we are, where we come from," Emudluk told the meeting.

"For thousands of years we've been here. We've been invaded by foreigners; we've had many different traumas. But even through all of this, we're going to stand up and be recognized as Aboriginal people. Parnasimautik is saying: here we are, don't forget us."

While it's been just four years since [Nunavimmiut voted against a proposed new government model in a 2011](#) region-wide reference, Nunavik's leadership wants the issue of self-governance back on the table.

"Self-government is one of the many future negotiations that will have to take place," Emudluk said in an interview with *Nunatsiaq News*. "KRG will have to be part of those discussions. And in a sense, Parnasimautik provides the foundation."

Ultimately, the region needs to work towards self-governance, she said.

[Makivik is tasked with leading those discussions](#), and any future negotiations, something its recently re-elected president, Jobie Tukkiapik, campaigned hard on.

"Never before have we Nunavik Inuit been at this stage of knowing what we want in governance," Tukkiapik said in January.

The Quebec government has yet to formally acknowledge or respond to the delivery of the final Parnasimautik report, Emudluk said, although the region hopes the province will refer to the document when debating regional issues.

"We've made reference to it in our dealings with ministers, whenever we have to file a position paper," Emudluk said.

But as a regional leader, it's the long-term impact the Parnasimautik consultations have had on Nunavik Inuit that matter most to her, she said, because it's a process that has helped to engage people at the community level.

A number of communities have continued the discussion through local roundtables, which report back to the community live through local radio.

“I’ve witnessed these meetings, people have actually shown up because they’ve been listening to the issues discussed on the radio,” Emudluk said. “It’s forcing local players in health, education or even the church groups to come together.”

That’s opened the lines of communication and helped to create a sense of ownership on local issues, she added.

The declaration will be made public at Makivik’s annual general meeting, which runs March 23 to March 28 in Kuujuaq.

You can read the full Parnasimautik report [here](#).

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674first_a_vision_now_a_declaration_new_talks_on_nunavik_self-government/

Chippewa Cree tribal chair ousted again

23 hours ago

GREAT FALLS, Mont. (AP) — The executive body of the Rocky Boy's Chippewa Cree tribes in north-central Montana voted Monday to expel chairman Ken Blatt St. Marks for the third time.

The Great Falls Tribune (<http://gftrib.com/18iYvov>) reported that in an opinion issued Monday, the Chippewa Cree Business Committee said they found St. Marks has "committed gross misconduct and neglected his duty."

The on-again, off-again chairman was first elected chair of the committee in 2012 and since that time has been ousted by the committee on two other occasions after theft, fraud, sexual harassment and other allegations. St. Marks has been reinstated after lengthy court battles and re-elections. He was most recently elected by voters again in February.

St. Marks has never been officially charged in tribal, state or federal court based on allegations in the committee's opinion. He has said the committee's actions are in retaliation for his cooperation with federal authorities investigating corruption.

The U.S. Interior Department ruled to that effect in December, saying the Chippewa Cree Business Committee violated federal whistleblower laws when it terminated St. Marks as its chairman in March 2013. The department determined there was sufficient evidence to indicate St. Marks was removed by the tribal council at the time because he was

cooperating with a federal corruption investigation on the Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation.

About a dozen people have been convicted or pleaded guilty to federal fraud charges over the awarding of construction contracts and kickbacks paid to tribal officials.

In this week's dismissal, the Chippewa Cree Business Committee said St. Marks has defrauded the tribe of more than \$2.3 million in fraudulent charges and shoddy or incomplete work performed by his construction company, Arrow Enterprises. St. Marks is also charged with attempting to improperly "freeze" tribal bank accounts and with interfering with an ongoing bankruptcy proceeding.

"They just keep on making up lies, they keep on saying I stole money and I keep on telling them the same thing — 'Go get me indicted,'" St. Marks told the Tribune on Tuesday. "I've never went through the tribal court on these charges. The courts have never, ever charged me with anything. It's the tribal council that keeps acting like judge, jury and executioner."

The most recent termination of St. Marks means the reservation will need to schedule the fourth election since November 2012.

Direct Link: http://helenair.com/news/state-and-regional/chippewa-cree-tribal-chair-ousted-again/article_bcf84410-3d35-5724-b98f-a94180e9b2b4.html

Aboriginal Sports

Penelakut First Nation wants to send 1st all-First Nations soccer team to Sweden

Fundraising co-ordinator says it would be a great opportunity for the kids to experience the world

By All Points West, [CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 02, 2015 2:09 PM PT Last Updated: Mar 02, 2015 3:23 PM PT



The Gothia Cup in Gothenburg, Sweden is an annual soccer tournament for boys and girls from 11 to 19 years old. (Alan Ihse / Reuters)

A B.C. soccer team is trying to get to an international youth soccer tournament in Sweden and become what it says would be the "first all-First Nations" team at the event.

A team of young players from Penelakut, near Chemainus on Vancouver Island, are planning to be among the 1,600 players at the annual [Gothia Cup in Sweden](#) this July.

First Nations players from Canada have been to the event before, but the team's manager says this would be the first time there would be a Canadian team of all First Nations players.

"I just think it's a great opportunity for our kids to go experience the world and a phenomenal tournament," said Pam Jack, a band councillor for the Penelakut First Nation.



The Penelakut First Nation youth soccer team is excited about the possibility of playing at an international competition in Sweden. (Penelakut First Nation / GoFundMe)

She added that the opportunity would allow the kids to "dream bigger and know that they can reach a higher potential than just here at home."

Jack says scouts for teams around the world attend the international competition. When she went with her daughter a few years ago, she saw many of the players get picked up and sign contracts with European teams.

Most of the players' families don't have the means to get the kids there, so she's been organizing fund raising efforts for the team, including [a GoFundMe site](#), raffles, online auctions and a gala.

She's also donated the \$700 honorarium she receives as a councillor.

Jack says so far the team has almost raised enough to pay for accommodations, tournament fees and food. But its still trying to cover the biggest cost: plane tickets for all the team members and coaches to get to Sweden.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/penelakut-first-nation-wants-to-send-1st-all-first-nations-soccer-team-to-sweden-1.2970704>

Aboriginal basketball player at St. Thomas making the most of his 2nd chance

By [Shelley Steeves](#) Senior Correspondent Global News, March 4, 2015 11:24 am



FREDERICTON – A St. Thomas University basketball player is proving that everybody deserves a second shot.

Quentin Sock had to overcome incredible odds to make the varsity team, and now he's inspiring other young aboriginal players to never give up on their dreams.

Sock and his St. Thomas Tommies teammates are practising for the playoffs, but he said he already feels like he's won at the game of life.

He grew up in Elsipogtog dreaming of playing varsity basketball. He got his first shot to play for the University of New Brunswick Varsity Reds in 2005, but things didn't go as he had planned. One day he "heard a snap", which turned out to be a torn ligament.

After he blew out his ankles, his life began to spiral out of control.

"I would get up and have a drink with my friends and it would roll into the night," he said. It led to five years living under the dark cloud of alcoholism.

"I was always sick and hungover, and keeping up with basketball was very difficult.

"It took me away from my passion, so it had to end. I said, 'No more. I am done.'"

Sock enrolled at St. Thomas in Aboriginal studies and took another shot at playing varsity ball. At 27 years old, however, he was out of shape and about a decade older than the rest of the team.

His coach Dwight Dickinson said he saw something special in Sock that went beyond his basketball skills.

"Those tough times, you know, they are not a bad thing when you get through them. The adversity and challenge that he has gone through has made him a great young man," he said.

He said Sock, now 29, has become a role model for his team and his First Nations community. Teammate Jeremy Speller from Gesgapegiag Quebec First Nation said he would never have considered trying out for varsity basketball if not for Sock.

When he's not on the university court, Sock coaches young aboriginal players back home in Elsipogtog, where he encourages kids to stay in school, to not drink and to dream big.

"One of my goals is to play professionally in the [National Basketball League] for Canada," he said. "I hope I can get it done... before I am 40, anyway."

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1862981/aboriginal-basketball-player-at-st-thomas-making-the-most-of-his-2nd-chance/>

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Injunction blocks Ottawa's attempt to change how N.W.T. resources are managed



Prime Minister Stephen Harper speaks to supporters in Fort Smith, Northwest Territories in this Aug. 22, 2014 file photo. (Adrian Wyld / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

The Canadian Press

Published Monday, March 2, 2015 5:11PM EST

YELLOWKNIFE -- A plan by the federal government to centralize control of resource development in the Northwest Territories has been delayed by a northern court ruling.

Justice Karan Shaner of the N.W.T. Supreme Court has granted an injunction that prevents Ottawa from collapsing local oversight boards into one agency led by a federal appointee.

Shaner wrote there's a "reasonable" chance the Conservative government's overhaul violates hard-won treaty guarantees in an agreement that granted self-government to aboriginals inhabiting a section of the southern Mackenzie Valley about twice the size of New Brunswick.

"The Tlicho government has raised a reasonable possibility that Canada has overstepped the bounds of what it is permitted to do under the Tlicho Agreement," Shaner wrote.

Ottawa's new regulatory board was supposed to come into effect April 1. Shaner's decision means the status quo will remain until a Tlicho lawsuit can be heard.

Tlicho lawyer Jason Madden said the lawsuit -- or perhaps even a possible appeal by Ottawa of the injunction-- won't be heard until after a federal election expected this fall.

"There is no way we are going to get a trial this year."

Madden said the injunction makes it clear that modern land claims can't be swept aside by federal fiat.

"It sends a message to the government that the old way of doing things, that Ottawa always knows best, doesn't cut it any more. You have to work with your treaty partners."

The Tlicho lawsuit is one of two court actions opposing the Harper government's plans. The Sahtu Secretariat, which manages a land claim around Great Bear Lake, filed its own challenge last week.

Both actions are supported by the Gwich'in Tribal Council, which has a land claim north of the Sahtu.

The Tlicho and Sahtu negotiated hard for regulatory boards to oversee resource development on their lands. The deals also guaranteed half their positions to local people.

Under a clause appended to legislation that gave the territorial government province-like powers, Ottawa said it would replace those bodies with a single "superboard" headed by a federal appointee.

Shaner noted the federal move would reduce Tlicho representation from half to one out of 10.

Federal lawyers have argued that a clause in the Tlicho Agreement allows for the possibility of rolling local boards into one.

The lawsuits claim Ottawa made no serious attempt to accommodate their concerns. A federal negotiator did hold talks, but another federal official has testified in court that Ottawa had already decided the superboard would go ahead.

A statement from the office of Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt wouldn't say if an appeal of the injunction would be filed.

"We are reviewing the court's decision," said the email. "We are clear that we will vigorously defend the new regulatory framework."

"The economic future of Canada's North, and in this case the Mackenzie Valley, requires a strong and efficient regulatory framework. The changes we enacted in 2014 provide that framework."

Madden said the federal attempts have just caused confusion.

"What they've done has created more uncertainty in the territories than spurred economic development."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/injunction-blocks-ottawa-s-attempt-to-change-how-n-w-t-resources-are-managed-1.2260652>

Feds to reopen herring fishery despite objections by First Nations and scientists

Conservative Fishing Minister reopened the herring fisheries against the views of federal scientists, a court heard.

[Mychaylo Prystupa](#)

Feb 28th, 2015



Bear looking for herring on the west coast of Vancouver Island. Photo by Raincoast Conservation.

A federal court struck down a legal attack by coastal B.C. First Nations attempting to overturn the federal Conservative fishing minister's decision to reopen herring fisheries in coastal waters.

The oily fish—that ordinarily provides a springtime feeding frenzy for grizzlies, whales and wolves—has not been fished in three coastal pockets since 2005, due to over-fishing concerns.

Five B.C. First Nations, along with federal scientists, still believe herring stocks on the west coast of Vancouver Island, around Haida Gwaii and on the central coast are in a seriously fragile state. That's why the Aboriginal communities filed an injunction to stop the federal minister, who re-opened the resource to commercial fishing in January.

Controversially, the court heard that Minister Gail Shea, a Conservative MLA from PEI, made the decision against the views of her own federal scientists. Last year, Department of Fisheries and Oceans scientists told her:

“For the three [herring fishing] areas showing signs of recovery, it is recommended that they remain closed in 2014,” a DFO memo concluded.

The minister was not immediately available for comment late Friday.

Science ignored?

The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council said the Harper government's decision to proceed against scientific recommendations is a familiar situation.

“The minister rejected the advice of her entire department — not just the scientists, but also her senior managers, and senior staff,” said the council's fisheries scientist, Dr. Don Hall.

“She chose to open [the fishery]. Who convinced her to open it? It seems only logical that it was the industry,” he added.

But despite the protestations over the state of the herring— first to the minister, and later to the court — the First Nations' injunction was thrown out by a federal judge late Friday afternoon. The fishing industry lobby was pleased with the ruling, stating it confirms the herring levels are now sustainable.

It added that the federal government spends more than one million dollars annually calculating the size of the herring stock.

“The fishing industry is fine with not fishing... when [herring stocks] need to re-build,” said Greg Thomas, chair of the Herring Industry Advisory Board on Friday.

“But when the stocks resume, industry needs to access these areas to sustain the industry,” he added.

The industry group says First Nations and commercial fisheries are “not far apart,” since both want a sustainable fishery.



Herring spawn eggs in tidal waters in the Great Bear Rainforest on B.C.'s central coast. Photo by Pacific Wild.

But the Nuu-chah-nulth dispute the federal methodology used to assess the health of the herring stocks. They state that their indigenous fishermen have seldom seen lower levels of herring roe (eggs) in their traditional nets.

“Last year, like they’ve done for hundreds and thousands of years, Nuu-chah-nulth went out, and up and down the coast of Vancouver Island, and they saw very poor evidence of spawn,” said Hall.

Police presence at fishing docks

The issue has polarized commercial fishing companies and Aboriginal peoples for two years, resulting in a high-level RCMP presence last year to keep the peace over the controversial fishing.



RCMP boats stationed in Bella Bella in spring 2014 to keep the peace over the herring fishing. Photo by Pacific Wild.

Reportedly, 60 RCMP were dispatched to the Bella Bella area last spring.

“Last year, it was ridiculous. What did that cost the Canadian taxpayer, to have RCMP boats and staff up there, for the value of this fishery? It makes no sense,” said Hall.

Heiltsuk Tribal Council on the central coast has now asked the RCMP to clarify what kind of police presence they might send this year, said Hall.

The 'First Nations versus the industry' drama has even caught the attention of [National Geographic](#) this month, which reported on the collapse of herring stocks worldwide. It quoted Haida Gwaii officials worried the commercial fishing boats will harm the herring stocks further.

"We can't risk them taking any more," Guujaaw, ex-president of the Council of the Haida Nation told National Geographic. "Herring are central to everything here."

Friday's court ruling means commercial fishing boats will be entitled to return to the coastal areas of concern.

But a further legal attack is coming. Several First Nations are filing a B.C. Supreme Court challenge in March, asking the court if indigenous rights have been ignored in the coastal fishing areas.

Ahousaht, Ehattesaht, Hesquiht, Mowachaht/Muchalaht and Tla-o-qui-aht First Nations were all fighting for the injunction.

Direct Link: <http://www.vancouverobserver.com/news/feds-reopen-herring-fishery-over-scientist-and-first-nations-objections>

First Nations to study viability of Ring of Fire road

Rachelle Younglai

The Globe and Mail

Published Sunday, Mar. 01 2015, 6:56 PM EST

Last updated Monday, Mar. 02 2015, 1:18 PM EST

The Canadian government is helping study whether a road to the Ring of Fire mineral belt in northern Ontario is viable.

The \$785,000 government-funded study to be carried out by First Nations groups is a tiny step toward the possible development of the Ring, a huge crescent of mostly chromite that some hope will bring economic prosperity to Canada's north.

If the road is ever built, four of the nine First Nations groups that surround the deposit would be able to use it to get in and out of their remote communities.

"It's a struggle to connect with mainstream society," Cornelius Wabasse, the chief of Webequie First Nation, said at a mining conference in Toronto.

The Ring is years away from being developed, if at all. It may never be economical to mine the vast deposit of chromite, a mineral used in making steel.

The study will look at an east-west road from Pickle Lake to the Ring, located 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay.

It would provide access to a smaller nickel deposit that is owned by Noront Resources Ltd., which cannot mine the metal economically without a government-funded road.

Noront is pretty much the only company that is close to developing its deposit. The owner of largest chromite deposits, Cliffs Natural Resources, is trying to sell its land in the Ring.

The federal and Ontario government called the study an important milestone to developing the Ring.

But the announcement, made at the beginning of the annual Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada, comes amid few signs that the excitement that once characterized the Ring will return any time soon.

The study is expected to take up to a year to be completed.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/industry-news/energy-and-resources/first-nations-to-study-viability-of-ring-of-fire-road/article23239244/>

Ottawa advised to share resource taxes with aboriginals

By Bob Weber THE CANADIAN PRESS
March 3, 2015 7:15 pm



Chief Jeremy Fourhorns of the Piapot First Nation addresses hundreds of First Nations people who rallied at the Saskatchewan legislature Monday, Sept. 26, 2011 to call for better education and a bigger share of resource revenue.

EDMONTON – First Nations should get some of the money generated by resources on their lands, suggests a report commissioned by the federal government and the Assembly of First Nations.

The report, released Tuesday by the Working Group on Natural Resource Development, says a First Nations resource tax could be a consistent and practical way for mineral and energy wealth to benefit aboriginal communities.

“We strongly urge the federal government, along with the provinces and territories, to come together with First Nations to explore options for resource revenue sharing,” says the report.

“This discussion is long overdue and requires immediate action in order to bring greater predictability to resource development in Canada and establish a long-term pathway to greater First Nations self-reliance.”

The group was struck after a meeting between Prime Minister Stephen Harper and former Assembly of First Nations grand chief Shawn Atleo. Its report was issued after meetings in Toronto and Edmonton between First Nations, governments, industry and non-governmental organizations.

The report also suggests that aboriginals deserve a role in planning resource development, instead of just being asked to comment on projects that have already been finalized.

“We are notified at the 11th hour,” said Cameron Alexis, a co-chairman of the group and regional AFN chief for Alberta.

“The green light for the project has been given and we’ve become just a check mark. We need to be involved at the very beginning.”

The report also advocates international outreach to educate multinational corporations on how to do business on First Nations land.

Alexis said such measures are needed if aboriginal people are to fully participate in the \$675 billion of possible resource investment that the federal government says could be headed to Canada over the next decade.

“First Nations, for the most part, want to be engaged in decision-making and the economics of it.”

Resource revenue sharing could give First Nations access to the capital they need to become partners in development, said Alexis.

“It gives First Nations a chance to pool their money and invest in each other.”

Some industry groups are already in favour of involving bands in the design of their projects, he said.

Pierre Gratton of the Mining Association of Canada said miners are divided on revenue sharing. Some say it would ensure royalties they're already paying benefit local people; others fear it would lead to higher assessments.

"You just have to remember that it's one pie and you can only slice it so many ways."

He said his association recommends miners talk to aboriginal communities early. Sacred sites, hunting grounds or other important areas can often be avoided if companies get together with First Nations during the design stage.

"Active, early consultation is good business as well as good community relations," Gratton said.

A spokeswoman for Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt didn't respond to a specific question on whether the government would consider sharing resource royalties.

"We are currently reviewing the working group's report," said Emily Hillstrom in an email. "In the meantime, we will continue taking practical steps to build partnerships with aboriginal communities."

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1862179/ottawa-advised-to-share-resource-taxes-with-aboriginals/>

Canadian government pushing First Nations to give up land rights for oil and gas profits

Harper government organized private meetings between oil firms and Indigenous chiefs to try and gain support for oil and gas pipelines and other investments located on their lands, documents reveal



A rally against the expansion of the Kinder Morgan tar sands pipeline on Burnaby Mountain in British Columbia, Canada, in November, 2014.

[Martin Lukacs](#)

Tuesday 3 March 2015 06.02 GMT Last modified on Tuesday 3 March 2015 09.50 GMT

The Harper government is trying to win support for its pipelines and resource agenda by pushing First Nations to sideline their aboriginal rights in exchange for business opportunities, documents reveal.

The news that Canada's Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs is working to this end by collaborating with the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is sparking strong criticism from grassroots Indigenous people.

Funded by the federal government, the Working Group on Natural Resource Development held private meetings in Toronto and Edmonton in the fall of 2014 that were attended by several invited Chiefs and representatives from Enbridge, Syncrude and other oil corporations, as well as mining companies and business lobby groups.

In one email, a government official writes that it was "widely agreed" at the meetings that "unlocking resource development projects is squarely in the national interest," a suggestion that will be contested by many First Nations involved in mounting protests against pipelines and other industrial projects around the country.

It was "noted repeatedly" that "we can no longer afford the investment uncertainty created by issues around Aboriginal participation," the official writes. The transcripts of the meetings were redacted in the documents, which were obtained through access-to-information.

The documents cite \$600 billion of investment that the Harper government hopes will flow in the next decade into mining, forestry, gas and oil projects. As of March 2013, 94

of 105 projects under federal review were “located on reserve, within an historic treaty area, or in a settled or unsettled claims area”.

In response to these pressures, considerations for the groups’ mandate include “reducing uncertainty and investment risk” and “advancing business-to-business partnerships rather than through a rights-based agenda.”

The federal government has been criticized for trying to minimize or ignore the land rights of First Nations, including refusing to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. It has been doing extensive risk evaluations, increasingly [worried](#) that the growing power of indigenous rights could hamper its aggressive resource extraction plans.

One document suggests that “case studies have shown that separating rights-based agenda (politics) from economic development (business) is key to wealth generation in First Nations communities.”

The case studies cited from “expert bodies” include a Fraser Institute report entitled “Opportunities for First Nations Prosperity Through Oil and Gas Development.” The right-wing think tank has been heavily funded by the American Koch brothers, who are one of the [largest owners](#), purchasers and refiners of the Alberta tar sands.

Also referenced is a report by envoy Douglas Eyford, whose appointment by Harper in late 2013 was seen as strategic shift to increasingly woo First Nations in the path of planned pipelines in British Columbia with an economic stake in resource plans. Eyford warned that the federal government’s failure to build good relationships with First Nations had set back the chances for their energy projects.

“Opposition to these projects by aboriginal groups may doom the development of oil, and natural gas pipelines and related infrastructure because neither industry nor our trading partners are prepared to idly stand by to wait out the results of judicial proceedings that can take a generation to complete,” Eyford [said](#) in a speech last year.

“The Harper government and resource corporations are keenly aware that Indigenous rights movements are standing in the way of their polluting, destructive projects,” said Clayton Thomas Mueller, Indigenous Extreme [Energy](#) Campaigner with 350.org. “Harper is desperately trying to manipulate the Assembly of First Nations and some of our Chiefs into sacrificing our rights and our lands at the altar of profit. But respect for our rights must be a basis for economic decision-making – indeed our rights offer a pathway to a more sustainable economic order for everyone in this country.”

The group was launched in December 2013, its creation among the pledges made by Prime Minister Harper at a January 2013 meeting with former National Chief Shawn Atleo, a meeting triggered by Theresa Spence’s hunger strike and the Idle No More movement.

It has two representatives from the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs and two from the Assembly of First Nations, an organization which has been accused of being out of touch with grassroots Indigenous concerns. According to the documents, the representatives discussed renaming the group to “downplay” the connection between the Assembly of First Nations and the government and to make clear that it operates at “arms-length.”

The documents acknowledge that Indigenous community members are increasingly resisting those Chiefs who “try to establish and advance a “business to business” relationship with industry proponents.”

Included are detailed charts of economic opportunities that some First Nations located near oil and mining operations have been able to access.

The documents say that the group may propose that Canada’s largest corporate lobby, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, be “engaged to champion a new approach including through formal statements at First Minister’s Meetings or major political events.”

Other suggestions include a “centre of expertise on resource development” and a national roundtable, emphasizing the need to get more aboriginal organizations involved.

The group is releasing a final report on Tuesday with recommendations to the federal government and the AFN.

The Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs was unable to respond to a request for comment.

Direct Link: <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/true-north/2015/mar/03/documents-harper-pushing-first-nations-to-shelve-rights-buy-into-resource-rush>

Blueberry River First Nations lawsuit threatens Site C, fracking in B.C.

Suit alleges government violated Treaty 8 rights with cumulative impacts of oil and gas development

[CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 04, 2015 3:48 PM PT Last Updated: Mar 04, 2015 4:00 PM PT



Chief Marvin Yahey of the Blueberry River First Nations said talks with the government have been 'disappointing' and don't add up to meaningful consultation. (CBC)

The Blueberry River First Nations have launched a legal battle that could affect B.C.'s planned Site C hydroelectric dam, as well as oil and gas development both inside and outside the band's territory.

The B.C. First Nation has [filed a lawsuit in B.C. Supreme Court](#) that alleges years of development, including mining, forestry and oil and gas projects, have violated its treaty rights under Treaty 8.

"The province is not abiding by our treaty rights that were given to us back in 1900," said Chief Marvin Yahey of the Blueberry River First Nations.

The band has raised concerns about hydraulic fracturing - or fracking - for natural gas in their territory for more than a decade, but the B.C. government hasn't listened, said Yahey.

He said Blueberry River First Nations want the Site C dam and other projects slowed to provide time for consultation, which he called "disappointing" to date.

"There has always been talk, yes, but never a meaningful consultation to address our concerns," said Yahey.

The area the band claims as its traditional territory is located in northeastern B.C. and includes the city of Fort St. John and the location of the proposed Site C dam.

It's also the area that has seen rapid development in the natural gas sector.

Yahey said only a "very small" percentage of Blueberry River First Nations' 470 band members make a living in the industry.

B.C. government calls lawsuit 'unfortunate'

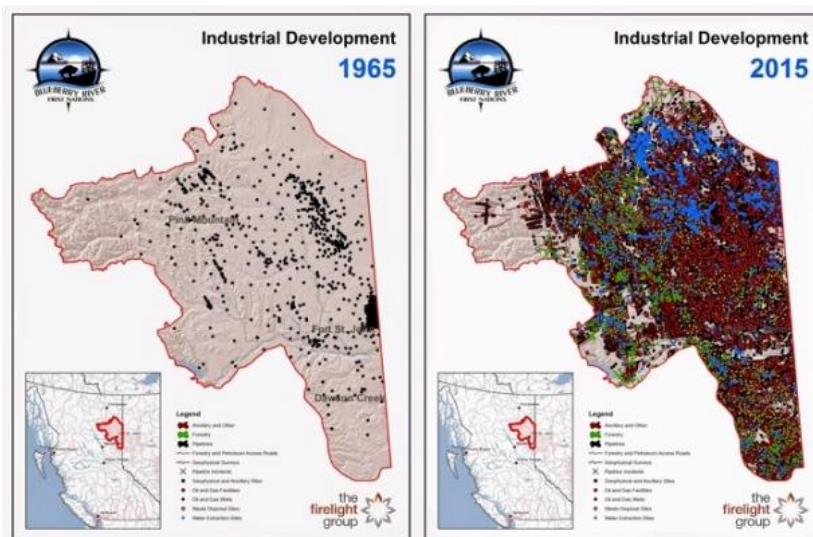
In a statement, the B.C. government said it is "committed to consulting with Blueberry River First Nations and all Treaty 8 First Nations" on decisions that affect their hunting, fishing and trapping treaty rights.

"We remain committed to reaching a respectful, long-term government-to-government relationship," said Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister John Rustad in a statement.

He said he had been meeting with Chief Yahey and the Blueberry River First Nations.

"It's unfortunate Blueberry River has chosen the path of litigation," wrote Rustad.

The Blueberry River First Nations are alleging that more than 90 per cent of their territory has been disrupted by development. [Click here for maps comparing industrial activity today to 50 years ago.](#)



The Blueberry River First Nations are alleging that more than 90 per cent of their territory has been disrupted by development. These maps compare industrial activity today to 50 years ago. (Blueberry River First Nations)

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/blueberry-river-first-nations-lawsuit-threatens-site-c-fracking-in-b-c-1.2981820>

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Nunavut MLAs confused about caribou hunting ban

"My constituents want written confirmation of any limitation"

LISA GREGOIRE,
February 26, 2015 - 3:45 pm



Barthelemy Nirlungayuk of Kugaaruk speaks during a Nov. 3 Baffin caribou consultation meeting in Iqaluit. Legislative members sought answers this week on the current ban on Baffin caribou harvesting. (FILE PHOTO)

Moratorium? Where does it say that?

Two members of Nunavut's legislature rose in the house this week to ask about the New Year's Day interim ban on caribou hunting on Baffin island, and to get details about what's going to happen next.

One even questioned whether the ban was in place at all, since he'd never seen written confirmation of the government decree.

The legislature's newest member, Pauloosie Keyootak of Uqqummiut, said "confusion has reigned," among his constituents and he asked Environment Minister Johnny Mike outright whether the moratorium had begun.

Mike confirmed that the moratorium had been in place since [Jan. 1, 2015](#).

"Has the department provided a written announcement to all communities of this moratorium?" Keyootak asked during question period in the Nunavut legislature Feb. 25.

"Of particular significance is the fact that our community doesn't have a wildlife officer presently and with no written confirmation and only radio announcements, some hunters don't believe that a moratorium is in effect, quite a number of them."

Although Inuit used to live by the oral tradition, more and more young people rely on the written word, he added.

"My constituents want written confirmation of any limitation, especially a moratorium on harvesting laid out in writing, outlining the rules Inuit have to follow," Keyootak said.

Mike said he held a teleconference with Baffin MLAs when the ban came into effect but there was no member for Uqqummiut at the time.

The former member for that riding, Sam Nuqingaq, was kicked out of the legislature in October 2014 and there was no official representation until the Feb. 9 byelection.

But, Mike added, the Qikiqtaaluk Wildlife Board and local hunters and trappers organizations were informed all along about what was happening with regard to dwindling caribou numbers and the need for drastic measures.

“With respect to correspondence not reaching his community, or if one was sent,” Mike added, “it is something I will have to look into.”

Aerial surveys within the last few years, combined with Inuit knowledge, have confirmed that the caribou herds on Baffin Island have reached dangerously low numbers.

Experts suggest there are fewer than [5,000 caribou on Baffin](#), a 95 per cent reduction from a population of about 150,000 estimated during the 1980s.

Of those current numbers, officials suggest there are only a few hundred left in north Baffin.

As a stop-gap measure, while they draft a formal caribou management plan, the Nunavut government issued a harvesting ban for the entire island, until further notice.

Quttiktuq MLA Isaac Shooyook, a traditional hunter, often plays the role of observer when the assembly is in session but he used both his member’s statement and question period Feb. 25 to talk about Baffin caribou.

He asked Mike when the Baffin caribou management plan will be drafted and how long it will take to complete.

Referring to him as the “esteemed elder,” Mike first thanked him for the question.

“Currently, the Nunavut Wildlife Management Board has proposed a public hearing for the Baffin region regarding caribou management,” Mike said.

The board announced last month that the [meeting would take place in Iqaluit](#) from March 11 to March 13.

“After the public hearing process has played out, I will be provided with a list of recommendations from various wildlife organizations and at that time, we will be deliberating on these issues. That’s all I can say at this time.”

Shooyook pressed on, asking for timeline details. “Will it extend to the spring? Will it extend to a couple of years?” he asked. “Will you speak to that after the management process has been played out?”

Mike said it’s too early to tell but added that the process of drafting a caribou management plan itself will take “a couple of months.”

Shooyook, a resident of Arctic Bay, wondered whether the caribou might have migrated to the mainland and whether the GN has considered whether it would be okay to allow Baffin residents near the mainland to hunt there while the ban is in place.

“It doesn’t stop any Inuk from going to the Kivalliq region or near Repulse Bay. They have that freedom to go hunting caribou in those regions,” said Mike.

“I know for a fact that people from Igloolik and Hall Beach have quite a few frostbites on their cheeks, probably because they have gone long distances to go caribou hunting.”

Mike added that before the moratorium was enacted, the GN considered allowing local hunting and trappers organizations to come up with their own plan to manage the hunt locally.

“There was never any movement to the HTOs managing their local hunters. It raised a lot of local concerns,” Mike said.

“I have also heard on the local radio that the government just wants to control everything. That wasn’t our position, but that end decision was not made lightly... At this time, I have yet to hear of any HTO grabbing that mandate to handle their local hunters.”

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavut_mlas_confused_about_caribou_hunting_ban/

B.C. court overturns \$1.75 million awarded to loggers over aboriginal blockade



A section of forest is harvested by loggers near Youbou, B.C., on Wednesday, Jan. 14, 2015. (Jonathan Hayward / The Canadian Press)

The Canadian Press

Published Thursday, February 26, 2015 9:06PM EST

VANCOUVER - British Columbia's top court says the province isn't liable for nearly \$2 million in damages suffered by a logging company as a result of a First Nations' blockade.

The case in the B.C. Court of Appeal pitted the provincial government, Moulton Contracting Ltd., and several members of the Fort Nelson First Nation against each other.

It followed a lower-court ruling in December 2013, ordering the province to pay the company \$1.75 million for failing to issue a warning about an imminent blockade to timber-harvest areas in B.C.'s northeast in 2006.

The government appealed, and Justice Risa Levine says the main issue focused on the timber licence and who is liable for third-party interference.

Levine says the lower-court judge erred in his ruling, noting a clause in the timber licence means the province can't be held liable for the company's losses because of the actions of a third party.

She set aside the order requiring the province to pay the \$1.75 million in damages and told the company to pick up various court costs incurred by the province and the First Nation.

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/business/b-c-court-overturms-1-75-million-awarded-to-loggers-over-aboriginal-blockade-1.2255946>

National roundtable to focus on violence prevention campaign

Inuit leaders say campaign should address violence against Indigenous women at home

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, March 02, 2015 - 6:59 am



ITK president Terry Audla speaks at a press conference following the Feb. 27 national roundtable on violence against Indigenous women in Ottawa. (PHOTO COURTESY OF ITK)

Governments and Indigenous groups from across the country say they're committed to joining efforts to end violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada, following the first ever national roundtable on the issue.

Indigenous families and leaders, premiers, provincial and territorial ministers and federal representatives met in Ottawa Feb. 27, pledging to develop a violence prevention and awareness campaign ahead of a second national roundtable in 2016.

The province of Manitoba has said it will host a meeting of police organizations and justice officials to look at issues of violence faced by Indigenous women.

Inuit representatives at the event, from [Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami](#) and [Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada](#), both acknowledged there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing violence, given the circumstances unique to Canada's North.

"We know that Inuit women and children are at the greatest risk of violence in their homes and our members feel prevention is the most important and urgent issue to be addressed after this roundtable," said Pauktuutit president Rebecca Kudloo in a Feb. 27 release.

"They have told us that unresolved trauma and abuse is the most significant underlying cause to be addressed, and we look forward to a whole-of-government response in working together to address this major physical and mental health issue."

ITK president Terry Audla noted that while violence has a human cost, and it also has an economic cost.

"Inuit live in some of the most remote communities in Canada, and the delivery of and access to programs and services in our homeland will always cost more than it does to provide those same programs and services in Southern Canada," he said in the same release.

The roundtable is the first coordinated national response to calls for a national inquiry into the number of missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.

A [May 2014 report prepared by the RCMP](#) found that 1,181 Aboriginal women have gone missing or have been murdered between 1980 and 2012.

That makes Indigenous women and girls about three times more likely to be victims of violence than non-Indigenous women in Canada.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has declined calls to hold a national inquiry, calling the issue a criminal matter, and not a sociological issue.

In a Feb. 27 release, federal Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development minister Bernard Valcourt said the government “recognizes that addressing violence against Aboriginal woman is a shared responsibility that requires commitment to action from all partners, including at the community level.”

“By meeting today and continuing to work together, we are sending a strong message that these abhorrent acts of violence will not be tolerated,” Valcourt said.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674national_roundtable_to_focus_on_violence_prevention_campaign/

B.C. First Nation starts case that could have far-reaching impact on development

THE CANADIAN PRESS March 4, 2015



An artist's rendering of the Site C project shows the generating station and spillway. A B.C. First Nation has launched a legal battle that could affect the province's planned Site C hydroelectric dam, as well as oil and gas development both inside and outside the band's territory.

VANCOUVER — A British Columbia First Nation has launched a lawsuit alleging its treaty rights have been violated by decades of development — a legal challenge that could affect the province's planned Site C hydroelectric dam project, as well as the expansion of mineral, oil and gas extraction in the province's north.

The lawsuit, filed in B.C. Supreme Court by the Blueberry River First Nations, follows several recent court decisions involving aboriginal rights, including a landmark Supreme Court of Canada last year that expanded how much influence First Nations can exert over development.

The Blueberry River band's lawsuit argues the cumulative effect of development in its traditional territory has harmed its way of life in violation of Treaty 8, which was ratified in 1900.

"There are vast dark zones in our territory where we are no longer able to practise our treaty rights," Chief Marvin Yahey told a news conference Wednesday.

He said oil and gas wells, pipelines and clearcuts had changed the land so much it would be unrecognizable to the band's ancestors and that development continued to shrink the group's territory at a rapid pace.

The band's traditional territory includes the proposed location of the Site C hydroelectric dam, an \$8.8-billion project approved last year that the provincial government says will generate 1,100 megawatts of electricity.

Construction is scheduled to start on Site C project in June, but it's one of the developments the band wants halted.

The statement of claim contends the band's lands and its rights to hunt and fish have been eroded cumulatively over multiple decades, something other Treaty 8 bands have not argued in court before.

John Rich, the group's lawyer, said the band tried for twenty years to address its concerns by negotiating with the province but without success or progress.

He said the lawsuit was a last resort.

"The Blueberry River First Nations' back is against the wall," said Rich. "They are suing to get a remedy from the courts that they have not been able to get through negotiation."

None of the allegations have been tested in court.

The provincial government did not make anyone available for an interview.

In an emailed statement, Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister John Rustad described the lawsuit as "unfortunate," and he said the government had negotiated development with all Treaty 8 First Nations, including Blueberry River.

Other northeastern B.C. First Nations covered by Treaty 8 have used the courts to slow down or stop the building of the Site C dam, requesting that environmental approvals or decisions be overturned because of inadequate consultation.

The Blueberry River lawsuit and previously filed cases related to Site C follow a string of court decisions that have redefined First Nations' rights when it comes to development projects in their territories.

The most significant case was released by the Supreme Court of Canada last year, when the high court granted B.C.'s Tsilhqot'in people title to 1,750 square kilometres of land.

Gordon Christie, who specializes in aboriginal law at the University of British Columbia, said last year's Supreme Court of Canada decision isn't directly related to the current because, unlike the Blueberry River band, the Tsilhqot'in did not have an existing treaty. Most of B.C.'s First Nations bands never signed treaties with the government.

Still, Christie said the Tsilhqot'in decision could affect the Blueberry River case later on.

"These are things that will get argued, probably, if this gets into court," said Christie, who directs the university's indigenous legal studies program.

He said there had been "lots of litigation" since 2004 from First Nations aimed at getting them a greater say in development and resource decisions and policy.

Christie estimated there had been hundreds of cases, but he said most First Nations had limited resources for long legal struggles, making the courts "a very uneven playing field."

Direct Link:

<http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/First+Nation+starts+case+that+could+have+reaching+impact/10861184/story.html>

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

**Inuit prepare list of priorities for women
and violence roundtable**

"You can't look the other way anymore"

LISA GREGOIRE

February 27, 2015 - 6:53 am



Nunavut Sivuniksavut students at a vigil held March 5, 2014 on Parliament Hill in support of a public inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. (PHOTO COURTESY OF NUNAVUT SIVUNIKSAVUT)

With dozens of high-ranking delegates expected to attend today's first roundtable discussion on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women in Ottawa — all of them with their own priorities and political agendas — Terry Audla admits it's a challenge to hope for change from a lot of talk.

But the president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami says at this point that just getting federal, provincial and Aboriginal leaders together at the same table with families of victims to talk about the most pressing issue in Aboriginal communities today is, in itself, progress.

You take what you can get.

"I can't be cynical. I always have to hope for the best. I can't be jaded and throw up my hands and say 'I give up.' That's too easy," Audla said.

"All I can do is reach out and give constructive criticism and at the same time, bring about more dialogue and understanding: these are the realities, this is what we need to do."

The two-day event, which included a closed door meeting of just victims' families Feb. 26, and the all-day political roundtable Feb. 27, was organized by a partnership between national Aboriginal organizations and provincial leaders.

Delegates are hoping to build a framework to combat [violence against Indigenous women and girls in Canada](#), a complex social issue perpetuated by many factors including poverty, racism, addictions, cultural loss, past colonialism, mental illness and the intergenerational impact of residential schools.

A May 2014 RCMP study confirmed that Aboriginal women in Canada [suffer much higher rates of violent crime](#) than non-Aboriginal women.

The 22-page [National Operational Overview](#) found that 1,181 Aboriginal women were murdered or reported missing between 1980 and 2012.

Audla will form part of a six-person Inuit delegation at the meeting, each of whom will get a chance to speak.

They include Pauktuutit President Rebecca Kudloo and Pauktuutit board member Annie Buchan, Sarah Leo, who is the Nunatsiavut president, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. President Cathy Towtongie and NTI youth representative Alyssa Flaherty-Spence.

Audla said he and his colleagues have been working this week on a list of points they want to get across at today's meeting, that:

- Inuit women and girls remain at greatest risk for violence in the home, so that should be the first priority for the prevention of violence. This could include school-based curriculum to promote self-esteem and healthy relationships;
- there's a need to improve support for families to help deal with the aftermath of violence by better access to general and specialized counselling and traditional healing programs; and,
- unresolved trauma needs to be tackled by several means, including by addressing residential school experiences, which Audla says currently underlies much of the violence in Inuit families.

It's clear, Audla said, that policy makers cannot address violence against women and girls without deconstructing and reducing violent tendencies of men.

Getting to the root causes of that aggression, and dealing with the family as a whole, would have a more significant impact on the issue than just building more safe shelters for women, he said.

If the roundtable produces a resulting document outlining priority areas, programs geared toward men and boys should be included in that priority list, Audla said.

"At the end of the day, this is about the whole family unit, who's causing the violence and how do we address that? I wish I had an answer toward decreasing the violence," he said.

"It's becoming brutal. It's becoming quite violent in our communities. I hate to say it, but it will probably get worse before it gets better. Some of the atrocities I hear about — I mean, it's not reported by media or even reported to police."

According to a [Nunavut judicial review](#) of assault, sexual assault and homicide in Nunavut from 2000 to 2012, the territory still leads the country in such violent crimes and was showing “no sign of slowing.”

Ultimately, safer, healthier communities are everybody’s responsibility, from political leaders to community leaders to neighbours, Audla said.

In the past, progress has been impeded by the “silo” mentality, he said — with everyone working independently on the same issue rather than collaborating. This roundtable, he said, will help break down those silos and help to build a true team effort.

“In my opinion, no one is faultless,” Audla said — including himself.

“These are our women and children and for them to go through the violence they go through. I myself grew up in a violent home. I’ve seen my mom medevaced on more than three occasions because of it.

“Sadly, it’s become almost normal in a lot of our communities. That has to stop. You can’t look the other way anymore.”

Though the federal government has so far refused to call a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, Ottawa is sending two ministers to this event: Status of Women Minister – Leitch and Bernard Valcourt, the minister for Aboriginal affairs.

“We now have the federal government at the table, which wasn’t the case before, right? So that’s progress in my opinion. So how do we capitalize on that?” he said.

“How do we actually work together in partnership with each other to try and address this endemic problem, and make it so that we come up with actual solutions? It’s a step forward. Hopefully after the roundtable, we’ll have increased commitment, from every level.”

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674inuit_prepare_list_of_priorities_for_women_and_violence_roundtable/

Delegates representing families of missing, murdered Indigenous women hope their testimony will be ‘first step’

[National News](#) | 5 days ago by [Jorge Barrera](#) |



Nunatukavut president Todd Russell (left) and Aboriginal Affairs minister Bernard Valcourt arrive at the roundtable meeting.

Jorge Barrera

APTN National News

OTTAWA—Judy Maas, from Blueberry River in British Columbia, whose sister Cynthia Maas was killed in 2010, delivered a powerful message that brought rousing applause from some delegates in the room during the morning session of the national roundtable on murdered and missing Indigenous women, according to people who were at the meeting.

Outside the Marriott Hotel meeting room, which is guarded by Ottawa police and plain-clothed RCMP personnel with ear-pieces, Maas said she was just telling the truth.

“I spoke the truth. I heard my own story and the stories that were told at the gathering and I wanted to deliver a message in a way, in a good way, in a way that allows us to be heard,” said Maas, whose sister was killed in Prince George, B.C.

Maas says it remains to be seen whether the roundtable, which includes federal and provincial representatives, including premiers, the leaders of Indigenous organizations and delegates representing the families, will achieve anything by the end of Friday.

“Time will tell and the opportunity to be heard is a first step,” said Maas, who was one of four delegates selected to represent the families of missing and murdered Indigenous women. “However, we are awaiting what is going to take place after this.”

Bev Jacobs, a former president of the Native Women’s Association, said she told the roundtable, now was the time to act.

“I also acknowledged the families who aren’t being heard and that they need to hear them,” said Jacobs, who was also one of four delegates selected to represent the families. “I talked about policing and responsibilities and acting immediately on missing persons, rather than waiting 24 hours.”

Some of those in attendance said they were disappointed the format of the meeting did not allow for a real exchange of views and prevented family representatives from

challenging the federal representatives, Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch, over their claims that the issue of violence against women stems from Indigenous communities themselves.

The meeting is being chaired by Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod. Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, along with Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger and Yukon Premier Darrel Pasloski are the only provincial leaders in attendance. The other provinces are represented by minister and senior officials.

The roundtable meeting runs until later Friday afternoon.

Direct Link: <http://aptn.ca/news/2015/02/27/delegates-representing-families-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-hope-testimony-will-first-step/>

Not enough data, not enough answers, on missing indigenous women

The Globe and Mail

Published Friday, Feb. 27 2015, 12:00 AM EST

Last updated Friday, Feb. 27 2015, 12:11 AM EST

This story is part of an ongoing Globe and Mail investigation into the hundreds of missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada.

Let the statistics speak, as they painfully emerge, about the missing and murdered indigenous women of Canada – and let the victims be mourned and, sometimes, restored to their communities.

An RCMP report last year found that 1,181 indigenous women were killed or disappeared between 1980 and 2012; of these, 164 are missing. This country also has at least 697 unidentified human remains. To improve the record of finding those who have gone missing, Parliament late last year enacted legislation to create a DNA-based databank, making it more likely to find matches between missing people and unidentified remains.

It's the right objective, and one part of solving the puzzle. But as a [Globe and Mail investigation reveals](#), the DNA database, so late in coming, already appears likely to fall short. Canada's plans are inferior to a similar American database that serves as its model. It isn't sufficiently funded, and data may not be consistently compiled across the country. Canada should be gathering as much information as possible on missing people and found remains, and placing them in a database that finds connections, if any. For the data to speak, we need data.

An effective database of the missing and the found would be one important step in solving the mystery of disappeared aboriginal women, and those of any Canadians who have gone missing.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper was not entirely wrong when he said last year that many of these cases are matters of crime. But his accompanying depreciation of sociological phenomena was mistaken. Solving a crime does not mean understanding, let alone addressing, an underlying cause. And the goal should be to prevent missing native women from disappearing, not simply figuring out, after the fact, who turned them into a corpse. Canadian police, scholars and governments still have a weak grasp on what the numbers really are, let alone what they mean.

Tina Fontaine's body was found in the Red River last August, but she might not have been found at all, and been classified as simply missing. In November, Rinnelle Harper, living in Winnipeg and apparently thriving, was assaulted; she seems to have narrowly escaped death, or disappearance into the Assiniboine River. A body found and a child rescued: In both these cases, at least we know something about what happened. But when it comes to the still-missing, we even don't know what happened. And not knowing what, we can't begin to understand why. That has to change.

Direct Link: <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/not-enough-data-not-enough-answers-on-missing-indigenous-women/article23220510/>

Politicians, First Nations agree to another roundtable before end of 2016

Federal government has repeatedly rejected calls for a national inquiry

The Canadian Press Posted: Feb 27, 2015 7:28 AM ET Last Updated: Feb 27, 2015 6:28 PM ET

The Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde called today's roundtable meeting on missing and murdered aboriginal women in Ottawa a start but he will continue to push for a national inquiry into the issue.

Bellegarde outlined three key areas where progress was made in the meeting:

- Prevention and awareness.
- Safety in communities.
- Issues regarding policing and justice.

"This is a step. We're still moving towards the call for a federal inquiry. That is there. That will not go away," said Bellegarde.

In the end, all participants agreed to move forward on only two items:

- National prevention campaign and awareness program.
- Best practices task force on policing and justice.

Participants also agreed to hold another roundtable meeting before the end of 2016.

Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Bernard Valcourt and Minister on the Status of Women Kellie Leitch held a separate news conference in a different location from the Provincial, Territorial and aboriginal leaders.

"Out of respect to the 20 organizations as well as to the families, we felt that they should be able to get their message out," explained Leitch.

She also pointed to the fact that her government has already taken action in the form of [a plan to address violence against aboriginal women and girls.](#)

The government has budgeted \$25 million over five years to deliver the plan – a commitment first announced in the February 2014 budget.

Earlier Friday, Susan Truppe, the parliamentary secretary to the federal status of women minister, insisted in the House of Commons that the government has taken action to alleviate the problem and that no more studies are needed.

Liberal M-P Carolyn Bennett, attending a similar meeting in Calgary, says many people and groups she has spoken with are resigned to the likelihood that there won't be an inquiry so long as Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservatives are in power.

Bennett says that means the only way to get one is through an election and a change of government.

Whether or not a national inquiry is called, many participants came to find support from others who shared their experiences.

"I decided to come here because I'm not prepared for nothing. I came here to learn and be able to help... and to heal," said Miriam Saunders, the mother of Loretta Saunders, a Halifax university student who was murdered last year.

As the roundtable was going on, a parallel meeting was held at Carleton University where attendees listened to families tell their stories.

Wynne wishes Harper had attended

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has rejected calls for a national inquiry into the nearly 1,200 aboriginal women who have been murdered or gone missing in the last 30 years.



Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, left, speaks to a witness before the start of the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Ottawa on Friday, Feb. 27, 2015. (Justin Tang/Canadian Press)

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne wished Harper could have attended today's meeting, but is pleased he sent Valcourt and Leitch.

N.W.T., Manitoba, Yukon premiers attend

Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod, Greg Selinger of Manitoba and Yukon's Darrell Pasloski were also at the meeting, which focused on prevention and awareness, community safety, policing and justice responses.

A coalition that includes Amnesty International released a study Thursday saying the federal government ignored 700 recommendations from many studies on how to reduce the number of missing and murdered aboriginal women.



AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde, right, sits with Rinelle Harper, 16, who survived a brutal attack in Winnipeg in November, as they wait for the start of the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls in Ottawa on Friday. (Justin Tang/Canadian Press)

Indigenous women make up 4.3 per cent of Canada's population, but account for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women.

Christa Big Canoe, with Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto, says Ottawa's failure to take the issue seriously is extremely painful for those families that have lost loved ones and are still looking for answers.

"We have to start by setting terms of reference that have meaning, that are going to actually result in change, that are actually going to result in improvements and progress," said Big Canoe.

"Otherwise, we're just sitting around a table, talking."

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/politicians-first-nations-agree-to-another-roundtable-before-end-of-2016-1.2975001>

5 reasons the roundtable on missing and murdered aboriginal women matters

Native women are twice as likely to suffer domestic abuse, and have shorter life expectancy. Recommendations 20 years ago have done little to change that.

Published on Fri Feb 27 2015

Political and community leaders [came together in Ottawa](#) on Friday to discuss the high number of murders and disappearances of aboriginal women in Canada.

Here's why it matters:

1. Between 1980 and 2012, 1,181 aboriginal women have vanished or have been murdered.
2. In 1996, a five-volume, 4,000-page Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples — after 178 days of hearings and 350 research studies — made 440 recommendations to improve social, education, health and housing needs for aboriginal people. A review 10 years later found little change.
3. Because convicted serial killers such as Robert Pickton in B.C. and John Crawford in Saskatchewan were able to exploit police and media indifference to kill innocent women.
4. Bella Laboucan-McLean, a 25-year-old fashion student of aboriginal heritage, fell 31 storeys from a Toronto condo, and no one who was with her that night reported seeing it happen. Her death remains a mystery.

5. There are more than 700,000 aboriginal women in Canada. According to Statistics Canada:

- Aboriginal women are twice as likely as the average Canadian woman to be victims of spousal violence.
- They are half as likely to have a university degree.
- About 30 per cent of all aboriginal women live below the poverty line.

* Aboriginal women live an average five years fewer than non-aboriginal women.

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/02/27/5-reasons-the-roundtable-on-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-matters.html>

Leaders meet today on missing and murdered aboriginal women

Provincial leaders and First Nations leaders will attend today's meeting, but Prime Minister Stephen Harper has rejected calls for a national inquiry

[The Canadian Press](#)

February 27, 2015

OTTAWA – Pressure is mounting on the federal government to take action on missing and murdered aboriginal women, with several premiers and aboriginal leaders meeting in Ottawa today to try to determine what can be done.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper has rejected calls for a national inquiry into the nearly 1,200 aboriginal women who have been murdered or gone missing in the last 30 years.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne wishes Harper would attend today's meeting, but is pleased he's sending two representatives: Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch.

Wynne hopes the federal government will at least provide funding if the provinces, territories and aboriginal leaders agree to take steps such as finding ways for police to better share information and creating a public relations campaign.

Assembly of First Nations national chief Perry Bellegarde says one of the big issues for the provinces and federal government to decide is who will pay for any action they decide to take.

Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod, Greg Selinger of Manitoba and Yukon's Darrell Pasloski are also expected at the meeting, which will focus on prevention and awareness, community safety, policing and justice responses.

A coalition that includes Amnesty International released a study Thursday saying the federal government ignored 700 recommendations from many studies on how to reduce the number of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Indigenous women make up 4.3 per cent of Canada's population, but account for 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women.

Christa Big Canoe, with Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto, says Ottawa's failure to take the issue seriously is extremely painful for those families that have lost loved ones and are still looking for answers.

"We have to start by setting terms of reference that have meaning, that are going to actually result in change, that are actually going to result in improvements and progress," said Big Canoe. "Otherwise, we're just sitting around a table, talking."

Direct Link: <http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/leaders-meet-today-on-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women/>

Families of murdered, missing aboriginal women share their stories



CeeJai Julian, an aboriginal woman who escaped mass murderer Robert Pickton's farm, holds her drum at the People's Gathering for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls at Carleton University in Ottawa, on Friday.
Hamilton Spectator

By [Steve Rennie](#)

OTTAWA — CeeJai Julian will never forget the last time she saw her big sister alive.

As they stood near the Balmoral Hotel in Vancouver's notorious Downtown Eastside on that September day in 1992, Norma George pleaded with her little sister to get off the streets.

"She said, 'Go home, baby girl. Go home, baby girl. Go home, baby girl,'" Julian said.

"And if I knew that was the last time I was going to see my sister, I wouldn't have let go of her."

Julian — a former sex worker and a recovering drug addict — was one of the women who shared her story of suffering and loss Friday at a "people's gathering" at Carleton University in Ottawa.

Across town, representatives of the federal and provincial governments and aboriginal groups gathered at a downtown hotel for a much-hyped roundtable on the issue of murdered and missing aboriginal women and girls.

The roundtable adjourned with a plan to keep talking about the issue.

That seven-hour meeting was a far cry from the full-blown national inquiry for which aboriginal groups, opposition parties and many ordinary Canadians have been clamouring.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government has steadfastly refused to heed those calls, maintaining plenty of people have studied the problem and that the time has come to take action.

Calls for a national inquiry have been growing since RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson revealed last year that nearly 1,200 aboriginal women have been murdered or gone missing in Canada in the last 30 years — hundreds more than previously thought.

Julian's sister was one of them.

Police knocked on Julian's door one day to tell her they had found George's body. In an interview Friday, Julian said she turned to drugs and alcohol to cope with the pain of losing her sister.

She ended up living in the Downtown Eastside. Other women she knew disappeared, their faces appearing one by one on missing posters that lined the walls of the needle exchange she frequented.

"I started not wanting to look at that wall anymore because it's like, 'Which sister of mine is gone now?'" Julian said.

She ended up behind bars for a time. That's when she first heard the "women warriors' song" — the same one she sang and beat a drum to on Friday morning.

Julian says she's now clean, sober and a long way from her days on the streets of Vancouver. But she still harbours resentment for a justice system which she believes failed her and the other women of the Downtown Eastside.

She doesn't hold out much hope the roundtable will accomplish anything — in part, she says, because the family members who were chosen to attend are only being given a few minutes to speak.

She'd much prefer a national inquiry, because it would be a way for governments to acknowledge the pain and suffering she and others have suffered — and to apologize for not having done enough.

Above all, she said, the violence has to stop.

"It could be your daughter. It could be your grandmother," Julian said.

"It could be your mother, or the girl next door, the one that's standing on the corner at the 7-11. The one that decides to go to a movie theatre and never comes home."

The Canadian Press

RCMP report

In 2014, the RCMP released a report on murdered and missing aboriginal women. It covered the period between 1980 and 2012. Here are some of the key findings:

- The report found there were 1,181 investigations of aboriginal females murdered or missing during the period, including 1,017 homicide victims and 164 missing.
- It found 225 unsolved cases of either missing or murdered aboriginal females: 105 missing for more than 30 days as of Nov. 4, 2013, whose cause of disappearance was "unknown" or "foul play suspected" and 120 unsolved homicides.
- During the period studied there were 20,313 homicides across Canada. Of these, 6,551, or 32 per cent, were women.
- There were 1,017 aboriginal female homicide victims in the period, representing 16 per cent of all female victims, even though they make up only about 4.3 per cent of the total female population.
- The 164 aboriginal females who were missing as of Nov. 4, 2013, made up 11.3 per cent of the 1,455 females listed as missing.

Direct Link: <http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5452759-families-of-murdered-missing-aboriginal-women-share-their-stories/>

Missing and murdered indigenous women roundtable to include families

Two days of meetings kick off in Ottawa

By Martha Troian, [CBC News](#) Posted: Feb 26, 2015 12:29 PM ET Last Updated: Feb 27, 2015 1:02 AM ET



Lorelei Williams is in Ottawa to attend the first national roundtable on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. Her aunt has been missing since 1977 and her cousin's DNA was found on Robert Pickton's farm. (Facebook)

Lorelei Williams is in Ottawa to attend the first national roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women and girls, a two-day event that kicked off today.

The event was organized by several indigenous groups, including the Native Women's Association of Canada and the Assembly of First Nations.

Today there is a closed meeting for families of the missing and murdered. They are there by invitation and will help guide the content of a presentation that will be made to a meeting of government officials and representatives from indigenous organizations that takes place on Friday.

Williams, from the St'at'imc and Sts'ailes Nations, said she welcomes the opportunity to participate, but she isn't sure what will be achieved.

"I feel at least there's something happening," said Williams. "I think any approach is good right now considering we have nothing right now."



In 1977, Lorelei Williams's aunt, Belinda Williams, disappeared in British Columbia without a trace. (Supplied by Lorelei Williams)

In 1977, her aunt Belinda Williams disappeared without a trace. Two decades later, her cousin Tanya Holyk also went missing. In 2002, investigators in British Columbia found Holyk's DNA on convicted killer Robert Pickton's farm.

Pickton was charged with murdering 26 women. In 2007, he was sentenced for the second-degree murders of six women. Most of his victims were from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

At today's closed meeting, it will be up to the families to decide which four delegates among them will participate at Friday's roundtable.

Friday's roundtable

The roundtable is a closed meeting of families of the missing and murdered, indigenous organizations, premiers from 13 provinces and territories and federal ministers.



AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde says he remains optimistic that the roundtable in Ottawa is an 'interim step' towards a national public inquiry. (Justin Tang/The Canadian Press)

The Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde said the roundtable is meant to develop a co-ordinated action plan to combat violence against indigenous women and girls. Prevention and awareness, community safety, policing and justice will be on the agenda.

Last week, Bellegarde said he remains optimistic that the roundtable in Ottawa on Feb. 27 is an "interim step" towards a much-needed national, public inquiry examining what he sees as the root causes of violence against indigenous women.

Each invited organization, province and territory was allowed to bring 10 participants and were encouraged to make family members part of their delegation.

Of those 10 delegates, only two are allowed to participate in the roundtable meeting at any time (delegates can rotate). The other eight are there strictly as observers and cannot take part in discussions or ask questions. The federal delegates are Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt and Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch.

After the meeting concludes, a short document will be produced that will outline the outcomes and next steps to be taken.

Williams hopes for action

"I'm hoping there will be more support for a national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls," says Williams.

"I am definitely going to voice that if I can."

She said she was discouraged after sitting through the B.C. missing women's inquiry last year.

'When the women have support, they will use it.'- *Lorelei Williams, First Nations participant*

Williams would also like to see more action and commitment from both levels of governments.

She works as an outreach co-ordinator at the Vancouver Aboriginal Community Policing Centre where many of her clients are related to missing and murdered women. She said funding cutbacks are proof that the issue isn't being taken seriously.

"When the women have support, they will use it," she said.



Tanya Holyk went missing from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside in 1996. Her cousin, Lorelei Williams, wants more government action on missing indigenous women. (Missingpeople.net)

As she pushes for action, Williams hangs on to the memories she has of her cousin Tanya.

"We used to always go the park, the baseball field. My aunts and uncles would play baseball and we would always get together."

Growing up, she was often told she looked like her aunt Belinda. Family members struggled over the loss of their loved one, she said.

"Every time I talked about my auntie their voices would shake," Williams said.

"Whatever I can do to help. I don't want this to happen to any other family, seeing how it affected my family."

There will also be a public event on Friday called The Peoples' Gathering. Participants will discuss solutions and make recommendations to end violence against women and girls. Speakers will include elders, leaders, health support workers, and families of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls. Video of the event will be streamed on the web.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/missing-and-murdered-indigenous-women-roundtable-to-include-families-1.2972445>

Roundtable on missing and murdered aboriginal women: Faces of the families

A look at those who came to Ottawa on Friday to discuss their loved ones.



CeeJai Julian, from Vancouver, last saw her sister, Norma George, in September 1992. George was found dead two months later. "It was just a really bad time in my life. She meant a lot to me," Julian says.

By: [Joanna Smith](#) Ottawa Bureau reporter, Published on Fri Feb 27 2015



Aileen Joseph said she comes to gatherings of families of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls because she meets friends who understand the way she feels.

"When my daughter was murdered, there was nothing at home where we could go to talk and tell our stories," said Joseph, of Ohsweken, on the Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation near Brantford, Ont.

Her daughter, Shelley Joseph, 40, was killed by her ex-partner in Hamilton on July 2, 2004.

“A lot of the things I heard before I came were things like: you have to forget about it. It’s been 10 years. We don’t forget. I don’t forget going to her apartment and seeing the blood on the wall and the footprints in the blood going from one room to the living room, or the blood stain on the couch where she died,” said Joseph.

“You don’t forget your grandson, when he sees a strange car coming in the driveway, he runs up and down the hallway, saying, ‘Quiet, hide,’” she said.

She fell into a long silence in front of a crowded room of family and supporters gathered at Carleton University in Ottawa on Friday.

“I’m sorry. Just, thank you for listening.”

...



CeeJai Julian remembers the last time she saw her sister, Norma George, in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, on September 28, 1992.

“She told me, ‘Go home, baby girl’, three times. I didn’t realize that was my goodbye to my sister. They found her later (in November). She was naked, in a fetal position,” Julian said of George, 32, who had two children.

“It affected me immediately, as well as my other family members, my other sisters. And then I turned to drugs, and ended up on the street. It was just a really bad time in my life. She meant a lot to me. She is still missed to this day,” Julian said.

“One time, it hurt me so bad and it kept me down, whereas now, today, I am standing up to honour her memory and to use my voice to say, ‘No, the women in my life and the women in this world matter to me: young or old, red, white, black or yellow — all women.’”

...



Sue Martin has dealt with endless frustrations since her daughter, Terrie Ann Dauphinais, was murdered April 29, 2002 in Calgary, her three young children locked inside the house with their mother's body for hours.

She is frustrated that the person she believes is her killer is free, but also at how every year, new families are experiencing similar losses and at how everyone — police, governments and aboriginal leaders included — all seem to be getting in the way.

“We’re being judged. Our women are being labelled as high risk. Get a flipping education. That is someone’s daughter. That is someone’s mother. Till you live a tragedy, you have no right to judge. No right to judge those people on what their tragedy is, because until you live it, you don’t know that pain. You don’t know that loss. And I pray that they never, ever do. I’m not angry. I’m frustrated at the bulls---, the lies,” Martin said.

“They call me hostile. I’m angry. No, I’m not angry. I speak the truth.”

Direct Link: <http://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2015/02/27/roundtable-on-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-women-faces-of-the-families.html>

Fundraiser will help Sisters in Spirit event

[Perry Bergson](#)

Published on March 01, 2015

A fundraiser held Saturday will help pay for events that create awareness for missing and murdered aboriginal women.



Donna Soles organized a flea market fundraiser for Missing & Murdered Aboriginal Women at the Indian & Metis Friendship Centre on Saturday. The money from tables that were rented will go towards future events she is planning.

A fundraiser held Saturday will help pay for events that create awareness for missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Donna Soles organized a flea market fundraiser at the Indian & Metis Friendship Centre on Saturday, with the money from tables that were rented going towards Sisters In Spirit events in October.

She says awareness is a big part of the problem.

“I just keep praying and asking people to please be aware that not all of these girls work the streets,” she said, listing examples of some missing people in the area. “They have to quit stereotyping the girls and boys.”

A dozen or so vendors had their wares on display in the gymnasium at the Friendship Centre as people walked from table to table.

Soles has done Sisters In Spirit events for seven years, targeting different groups every time.

On Oct. 4, a candlelight vigil and walk will be held. There will be a workshop in the days prior to the vigil when felt dolls will be made to symbolize the women who have vanished.

Another workshop will have elders directly addressing the families of missing and murdered women to help them with their grieving.

She worked with the aboriginal council years ago and has been with the Friendship Centre for 15 years. She’s watched the problem grow.

“It’s got to stop so we have to do something,” she said.

She wants to start in schools by targeting youngsters with a no-means-no message.

“They’re not sex objects or to be beaten up, Soles said of young women. “They have to have respect for women. While they’re in school, we can teach them while they’re young about stuff like that. Maybe they won’t be so bad.”

She said 12-14-year-olds don't know what's happening out on the street and need to be delivered a blunt message.

Soles adds that young women who catch rides also need some education.

"A lot of girls from the reserve hitchhike back and forth and they don't know who's picking them up," she said. "They don't tell anybody that they're hitchhiking and then they're missing."

She says the girls have to learn to tell somebody when they're hitchhiking, whether it's a parent or a friend.

Soles noted that a roundtable meeting held in Ottawa on Friday failed to gain ground on the contentious issue of a national inquiry into the matter.

While aboriginal women make up 4.3 per cent of the country's population, they are victims in 16 per cent of female homicides and 11.3 per cent of missing women.

She says efforts to get more local frontline workers to pay attention to the issues have resulted in meetings with people like Prince Albert Police Service Chief Troy Cooper, with good results.

Soles said she recently came upon a woman who was beaten and abandoned.

"How can somebody do that, beat them up and just leave them to die?" she said. "They're not animals. They're human beings."

Despite the size of the problem, Soles says she doesn't lose hope.

She says a former city councillor once told her that the path she was on would be a long one.

"I said 'It doesn't matter, if it takes me all my life. I'll do it.' That's why I do it, to help these young girls."

Direct Link: <http://www.paherald.sk.ca/section/2015-03-01/article-4061279/Fundraiser-will-help-Sisters-in-Spirit-event/1>

Missing and murdered: What it will take for indigenous women to feel safe

By Melina Laboucan-Massimo and Christa Big Canoe, [for CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 01, 2015 6:00 AM ET Last Updated: Mar 02, 2015 3:35 AM ET



"Searching for a way to feel safe daily is something that has been elusive for many indigenous women," say Christa Big Canoe and Melina Laboucan-Massimo. PHOTO: A march for missing and murdered indigenous women in Edmonton. (CBC)

***Christa Big Canoe** is Anishinaabekwe and a member of the Georgina Island First Nation. She is a lawyer, working with the Legal Advocacy Director of Aboriginal Legal Services of Toronto, and is the legal representative for the Laboucan family in relation to the July 20, 2013 death of Bella Laboucan-McLean.*

***Melina Laboucan-Massimo** is a member of the Lubicon Cree First Nation. She currently works as a tar sands climate and energy campaigner with Greenpeace and is completing her master's degree in indigenous governance. Her sister Bella's death remains unsolved.*

With almost 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW) in Canada, searching for a way to feel safe is a daily reality and something that has been elusive for many indigenous women.

As an indigenous woman and lawyer that provides legal representation to women who are victims of crime, and families who have lost loved ones, there are days where it is hard for me (Christa) to see light at the end of the tunnel. Working with families who experience that level of loss is humbling and difficult work on a good day.

As an indigenous and environmental activist, there are days when concern over basic things like clean drinking water and clean energy should be at the top of mind for me (Melina) but they are not. [The loss of my beloved sister Bella](#) can be too much to handle.



Bella Laboucan-McLean, from Sturgeon Lake Cree First Nation in Alberta, fell 31 storeys at a condominium in downtown Toronto on July 20, 2013, a death police consider suspicious. (Provided by It Starts With Us-MMIW)

A year and a half after the loss of Bella, there are little to no answers in the unsolved case. My sister's death is still undetermined and there are many suspicious clues.

It is difficult to not keep asking: "What is happening with the investigation? How did Bella die? Did she suffer? Why are the police not doing more?"

These are the types of questions that families experiencing loss have to reckon with on a daily basis. To have those questions deemed as unimportant by the federal government is offensive. There will be no progress without acknowledgement. There is no peace without justice.

Canada's failure to value indigenous women's lives

For both of us it is disheartening to listen to rhetoric from Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government about how MMIW and a national inquiry into the issue is unimportant.

Harper would have the public believe that "[We should not view this as a sociological phenomenon. We should view it as crime.](#)"

The Canadian public has heard (in an interview on Dec. 17, 2014) the prime minister saying, in response to a question about whether the government was considering a national inquiry: "[it isn't really high on our radar, to be honest.](#)"

Well, if honesty matters, then it should not surprise the federal government or the prime minister that indigenous people are literally at wits end about their treatment and Canada's failure to value indigenous women's lives.

This past Thursday a report from the Legal Research Strategy Coalition was released. The report reviewed 58 studies and the key findings and recommendations from those studies.

Shockingly, researchers found that only a few of over 700 recommendations in these reports have ever been fully implemented. This report demonstrates that the government's stance that MMIW is not a sociological phenomenon is wrong.

This report demonstrates decades-long inaction by the government to even start to adequately address the systemic and structural violence against indigenous women and girls.

What is needed now is actions based on the many findings and recommendations from the various studies.

What is also needed is an acknowledgement of the gravity of the situation and there is no better way to do this than through a public forum such as a national inquiry.

The government should legitimize the concerns of indigenous families and their fears for safety and not continue the victim-blaming. The government should also recognize that the issue is not as simple as a series of crimes but instead acknowledge that this violence is widespread across Canadian society — that this is not solely an indigenous issue.

Families need to play key role

An inquiry does not require a re-invention of the wheel. Moving forward with the knowledge from previous studies, inquiries and commissions will assist in creating a mandate that has meaning, that is actionable as well as accountable to the families of MMIW.

Families and survivors of those who have lost loved ones also need to have a key role in the formulation of what the inquiry should address.

We both see the connection between the root causes of violence to indigenous women and the loss of land, indigenous territory and access to a clean and healthy environment — necessary for the well being of all.

A failure to recognize the connection between racism and colonial legacies means that most Canadians do not understand the root causes leading to MMIW. This is not a popular position. It is not easy to hear that atrocious law, policy and attempted assimilation continues to resound over and over again for indigenous people.

[The Inter-American Commission of Human Rights released a report on murdered and missing indigenous women last month.](#) It documented how "the police have failed to adequately prevent and protect indigenous women and girls from killings, disappearances and extreme forms of violence, and have failed to diligently and promptly investigate these acts."

When the most vulnerable are not protected and indigenous women are five times more likely to die a violent death — what does this say about our society?

'Public awareness needs to be increased but most importantly indigenous women and girls need to walk in peace and safety.'- *Christa Big Canoe & Melina Laboucan-Massimo*

Every Canadian needs to pay attention and listen to what the federal government is saying or doing, but also, more importantly, what they are not doing. Every Canadian needs to make their own commitment to action that addresses systemic violence against indigenous peoples.

If roundtables solely lead to more roundtables than not enough is being done and meaningful change is not being enacted — especially when there is severely limited participation and a lack of inclusion of the families of MMIW in the process.

If any step of an inquiry is not led by and for families — including the allocation of adequate time and resources for each of the 1,200 families to seek justice for their family members — then it will not be meaningful or effective.

An inquiry needs to be called that is accountable to those it affects the most. Public awareness needs to be increased, but most importantly indigenous women and girls need to be able to walk in peace and safety.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/missing-and-murdered-what-it-will-take-for-indigenous-women-to-feel-safe-1.2977136>

Sask. reacts to missing and murdered aboriginal roundtable

By [Wendy Winiewski](#) Reporter Global News
February 28, 2015 7:13 pm



SASKATOON – Canada's first national roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women took place in Ottawa Friday. Considered a big step toward a national inquiry, local advocacy groups are thrilled but are tempering that with the knowledge there won't be immediate results.

In 1992, Saskatchewan resident Shelley Napope, 16, was murdered by John Martin Crawford, a man she never knew.

“She was killed out in a field,” said Darlene Okemaysim-Sicotte, with the Iskwewuk E-wichi-witochik coalition in Saskatoon.

The crime has haunted Okemaysim-Sicotte, Napope’s cousin, for the past decade. She has been rallying for solutions to the nationwide trend of missing and murdered indigenous women.

“Absolutely today is a positive sign,” said Okemaysim-Sicotte.

There was a historic roundtable in Ottawa with family members, aboriginal leaders and provincial government representatives. In attendance, federal ministers Bernard Valcourt and Kellie Leitch despite the prime minister saying his government will not launch an inquiry.

“As part of our discussions today, we agreed to meet again to discuss progress made and results achieved,” said Leitch, federal status of women minister.

However, it wasn’t the result the chief of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) hoped for.

“This is a step – we’re still moving towards the call for a federal inquiry – we’re still moving towards this,” said AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde.

The AFN is pleased with the suggestion to possibly hold a royal commission.

Okemaysim-Sicotte watched the discussion over the internet.

“It’s probably not going to be the outcome that people are envisioning at this particular point,” she said.

For advocates, it’s a step toward a solution nationally and here at home where aboriginal people make up 16 per cent of the provincial population.

According to the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, 33 females have gone missing in the province between 1940 and 2014. Eighteen of them are of aboriginal decent.

Direct Link: <http://globalnews.ca/news/1856787/sask-reacts-to-missing-and-murdered-aboriginal-roundtable/>

First Nations frustrated after roundtable talks on missing, murdered women



[Michelle Zilio](#), CTVNews.ca

Published Sunday, March 1, 2015 3:27PM EST

Last Updated Monday, March 2, 2015 7:23AM EST

First Nations are not happy with the results of last week's roundtable talks on missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Assembly of First Nations National Chief [Perry Bellegarde](#) told CTV's [Question Period](#) he was frustrated following the conclusion of the roundtable talks in Ottawa last Friday.

"I'm frustrated because we've been at this a long time," said Bellegarde.



Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger, left to right, speaks with Rinelle Harper and AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde as they wait for the National Roundtable on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls to begin in Ottawa on Friday, February 27, 2015. (Adrian Wyld / THE CANADIAN PRESS)



Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde speaks to CTV's Question Period following roundtable talks in Ottawa about missing and murdered aboriginal women on Friday, Feb. 27, 2015.

Aboriginal leaders met with federal and provincial leaders last week to tackle the issue of violence against aboriginal women.

They came out of the meeting with a framework committing to a dialogue on prevention and awareness, safety in First Nations communities, and policing and the justice system. They also agreed to meet again before the end of 2016 to discuss progress.

While Bellegarde welcomed the framework, he said "everybody expected more action-oriented results" – like money.

"April 1 is coming. Fiscal year is coming. Will there be key strategic investments from the federal government side in housing and in daycares and safe shelters? The provinces could also make key strategic investments in those areas," said Bellegarde.

Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne admitted Friday that she is growing impatient with the process.

Bellegarde said frustration was evident around the table at last week's talks, especially when it came to calls for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women.

"This was an action-oriented process," said Bellegarde. "It doesn't take the place of a push for a national inquiry."

While Bellegarde acknowledged Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch and Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt's presence at the roundtable talks, he said all government departments have to be involved in discussions about missing and murdered aboriginal women.

"You need Justice there, you need Health there, you need HRSDC there for training and employment," [said Bellegarde](#).

The Conservative government has repeatedly expressed its opposition to a national inquiry. Speaking to reporters at a government press conference following the meeting last week, Leitch said the government is committed to the agreed-upon action plan.

Leitch also highlighted the government's commitment of \$25 million over five years to continue to reduce violence against aboriginal women and girls. But that isn't enough, says Bellegarde.

"\$25 million over five years is just scratching the surface. If you're going to deal with the systemic problems, if you're going to deal with poverty, if you're going to deal with homelessness, if you're going with the need for safe shelters, where are those key strategic investments now? They're not there."

Not a First Nations problem

Bellegarde also rejected recent comments from Leitch in the Globe and Mail suggesting that aboriginal men are the ones threatening aboriginal women.

"For government officials to keep making those statements that it's an Indian problem or a First Nations problem, it's the men that are doing this, are very ill-informed," said Bellegarde. "People have to stop blaming and pointing the finger. There's an obligation of the federal government to deal with this."

Frustration for families of victims

Lorelei Williams, who lost a cousin and an aunt, said she was walked away angry after the roundtable meeting.

"I feel like I was just clawing away to get my voice heard," [Williams to CTV's Question Period](#).

Michele Pineault, whose daughter's remains were found on Robert Pickton's farm in B.C., said she was particularly bothered by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's refusal to attend the talks.

"He's proven to us time and time again that he doesn't care. That what he is showing us. That he just does not care."

Direct Link: <http://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/first-nations-frustrated-after-roundtable-talks-on-missing-murdered-women-1.2259077>

National MMIW roundtable accomplished little, First Nations activist says

Darlene Okemaysim-Sicotte says she's disappointed more families couldn't share their stories

Reported by **Lasia Kretzel**

First Posted: Mar 1, 2015 4:27pm

A Saskatoon First Nations activist says the results of Friday's roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous people are just a tiny step forward on a very long road.

Leaders of national First Nations, Inuit and Metis organizations, representatives of affected families and officials from provincial, territorial and federal governments gathered Friday for a roundtable on the issue of missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Darlene Okemaysim-Sicotte is the co-chair of Iskwewuk Ewichiwitochik (Women

Walking Together), a local group concerned about missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Okemaysim-Sicotte, whose cousin Shelley Napope went missing and was found murdered in the 90s, said she was disappointed with how few families of victims were able to share their stories.

"I think they really want their stories to be shared and they can share some of the challenges and triumphs of the works that they've been doing to search for their loved ones," she said, adding when families feel ignored their distrust grows. "Politicians and organization leaders tend to come with a methodology that is working for them... and it works on a bit of the population, but in the end, the indigenous families are still being really left out of what the solutions can be."

The biggest breakthrough of the roundtable was an agreement to meet again before the end of 2016, when leaders will assess the success of a multi-fronted public awareness campaign and an effort to find better community policing models.

Okemaysim-Sicotte said awareness campaign, the federal government's \$25-million dollars over five years and the other calls to action were not new to the indigenous community.

"It's just not a fluid delivery," she said. "The struggle is how to streamline that across the country."

Okemaysim-Sicotte said she would like to see more families involved in the process and given the chance to speak at the next roundtable.

"It's the tip of the iceberg and they've got a year to really get something more in place and more improved," she said.

Direct Link: <http://cjme.com/story/national-mmIW-roundtable-accomplished-little-first-nations-activist-says/538458>

REDress exhibit speaks of missing, murdered indigenous women

[CBC News](#) Posted: Mar 03, 2015 4:10 PM ET Last Updated: Mar 03, 2015 4:10 PM ET



Winnipeg artist Jaime Black says "having dresses outdoors ... puts them in elements [that] animate the dresses and allows them to dance, and that brings back a vitality that's missing." (Cathy Alex/CBC)

The issue of missing and murdered indigenous women is on display this week at Confederation College.

Winnipeg artist Jaime Black has hung about 100 red dresses around the campus, both indoors and out, as part of The REDress Project, which focuses on the issue of missing or murdered aboriginal women across Canada.



Métis artist Jaime Black has hung about 100 red dress around Confederation College's campus, both indoors and out. Black says she hopes her exhibit can promote discussions around racism and violence. (Cathy Alex/CBC)

Black said the dresses are empty to represent death and absence. She chose the colour red because it symbolizes many different things.

"It's the colour of life blood. It's the colour of love, but it's also the colour of spilled blood. So it has connotations of both the positive and the negative aspects of being an aboriginal woman in Canada."

Black said she hopes her exhibit can promote discussions around racism and violence.

"I feel like this work is almost spiritual in nature because I feel it's calling the spirits, possibly, of these women back to a place where they can tell their story, where their stories can be told," Black continued.

“Having dresses outdoors really puts them in, I think, a sacred space where they can interact with the weather and the wind. Those elements animate the dresses and allows them to dance, and that brings back a vitality that's missing. It really does have a haunting effect.”

The REDress Project will remain at Confederation College until March 11.

Direct Link: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/thunder-bay/redress-exhibit-speaks-of-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-1.2980321>

MLA takes Nunavut to task for opposing national MMIW inquiry

“We seem to be abandoning our fellow aboriginal people”

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, March 03, 2015 - 12:50 pm



Tununiq MLA Joe Enook said March 2 in the legislative assembly that in not supporting calls for an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal woman, Nunavut may be "abandoning our fellow aboriginal people." (FILE PHOTO)

The Nunavut government's opposition to a national inquiry on missing and murdered indigenous women is "unfortunate," Tununiq MLA Joe Enook said March 2 in the legislative assembly.

"We seem to be abandoning our fellow aboriginal people because we don't have many missing women in Nunavut. It is an unfortunate position to take," Enook said in a question aimed at Jeannie Ugyuk, the minister responsible for the status of women.

In a statement earlier that afternoon, Ugyuk said keeping indigenous women and girls safety is a "shared national responsibility."

And she also said the Nunavut government is committed to the [framework that governments and indigenous representatives agreed to](#) at the first-ever national roundtable held on Feb. 27.

But she did not say whether Nunavut supports a national inquiry, a demand made by numerous Aboriginal organizations, federal opposition parties and some non-Aboriginal public governments.

To that end, Enook asked Ugyuk to state the Nunavut government's position on a national inquiry.

Ugyuk replied by saying that Nunavut prefers to seek funding to "heal our families" and "support families" and that, "we don't have many missing women, although women have been murdered in Nunavut."

She also said a national inquiry would cost too much.

"With respect to the national inquest or inquiry, it will cost an exorbitant amount to hold that inquest [sic] and we are looking at ways to resolve our social issues through other avenues," Ugyuk said.

In an answer to a follow-up question from Enook, she repeated that Nunavut does not suffer from large numbers of missing and murdered women.

"In Nunavut, we aren't searching for a multitude of missing women and that is what I was trying to get across. Women in Nunavut have been murdered. However, we are fortunate not to have many missing women," she said.

There was no mention made of Nunavut women who leave the territory and go missing in urban centres such as Ottawa or Winnipeg.

In his last question, Enook took exception to Ugyuk's description of the GN position on the MMIW issue, saying the territorial government is out of step with aboriginal people across the country.

“That is unfortunate...,” Enook said.

Ugyuk replied that Nunavut will seek funding from the federal government to reduce family violence.

“One of our priorities here in Nunavut is to quell the violence between spouses, with territorial numbers way above the national average, as we well know,” Ugyuk said.

Direct Link:

http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674mla_takes_nunavut_to_task_for_opposing_national_mmiw_inquiry/

NDP, Liberals vow to make missing and murdered aboriginal women an election issue

By [Laura Beaulne-Stuebing](#) / [Canada Politics](#) – Tue, 3 Mar, 2015



On the heels of last week’s national roundtable on missing and murdered indigenous women in Ottawa, both main opposition parties in the House of Commons are promising to make the issue a priority in the upcoming federal election.

NDP aboriginal affairs critic Niki Ashton and Liberal aboriginal affairs critic Carolyn Bennett told *Yahoo Canada News* they will be pushing for a national inquiry over the coming election campaign.

“Absolutely,” Ashton said. “There is real need for political leadership for this issue.”

The Conservative government has been resolute in its position against holding a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. Prime Minister Stephen Harper said in December that “it isn’t really high on our radar, to be honest.” He has called the issue a crime problem, and not a sociological one.

Aboriginal affairs minister Bernard Valcourt and Minister for the Status of Women Kellie Leitch held a separate press conference from the rest of the participants — including Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne, Northwest Territories Premier Bob McLeod and leaders from Canada's national aboriginal organizations — at the national roundtable on Feb. 27.

The ministers highlighted an action plan the government introduced last fall, \$5 million a year over five years, which critics say simply isn't enough.

After the roundtable — where delegates agreed on a broad framework and to meet again in a year's time — wrapped up, Assembly of First Nations National Chief Perry Bellegarde reminded reporters of a recent Angus Reid poll that showed three quarters of Canadians support holding a national inquiry.

That number seems to be a bolster for organizations and parties that have been pushing for an inquiry for years.

"What's clear is that a growing number of Canadians know it's important," Ashton said.

Indigenous communities have been mobilizing over the issue for a long time, she added, and a "record number" of non-indigenous Canadians are showing up at vigils, signing petitions and calling for action from their federal representatives.

"This is also very much a regional issue as well," she said. "In Manitoba, people's worlds have been rocked by the discovery of Tina Fontaine. The fact that the remains of a young woman were found wrapped in plastic, floating on the Red River, shocked people to their core."

The stories of Tina Fontaine, the Highway of Tears in B.C. and of Loretta Saunders, whose body was found on the side of the highway in New Brunswick, have mobilized people "in a way that you won't get a sense of in Ottawa, or in Parliament," Ashton said.

The Liberal Party's Carolyn Bennett said in an email that the only way Canadians will get a national inquiry "supported by all of the premiers, Aboriginal leaders, the international community, civil society and the victims' families is by changing the federal government."

She added that "over the coming months Liberals will not only continue to call attention to this national disgrace, but will make addressing this epidemic of violence an election issue."

The interim president of the Native Women's Association of Canada agrees that things would be very different if everyone who wants an inquiry showed up at the polls on election day.

“I believe very strongly that if aboriginal people, if women, if all of our people, if all of those people who are being quoted as being supportive of a national inquiry get out and vote with their hearts...then absolutely there is going to be some significant changes,” Dawn Harvard said in an interview with *Yahoo Canada News*.

She noted that not only will pushing for a national inquiry be an election issue, “it absolutely has to be an election issue. The majority of Canadians believe that we do need a national inquiry and it should happen.”

A large and significant proportion of Canada’s indigenous population feels provincial, municipal and federal governments do not represent it, Harvard said. Over the coming months, NWAC will be holding workshops across the country to try and engage aboriginal people in the federal election, and get them to vote.

“The reality is that it is those...representatives who are making the decisions that are having an impact on our lives...[they are] the ones who are deciding on the legislation, on the policy, on one thing after another,” she said.

“And the missing and murdered being a prime example of the fact that we can no longer afford to stand back and let the rest of Canada decide for us who will be the leader, who will be making decisions,” Harvard continued.

“We need to get out and vote and make our voice heard.”

Direct Link: <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/blogs/canada-politics/ndp-liberals-vow-to-make-missing-and-murdered-000359486.html>

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Tribes from around US gather to discuss legal marijuana

By GENE JOHNSON February 27, 2015 8:39 PM



TULALIP, Wash. (AP) — The Justice Department's announcement in December that it would allow the nation's Indian tribes to legalize and regulate marijuana on their reservations brought notes of caution — if not silence or opposition — from many tribes.

They were reluctant given the substance-abuse problems that already plague many reservations.

But the attendance at a conference on the topic Friday gave an early indication of just how many might be weighing it, even if a thicket of potential legal issues remain.

Representatives of about 75 tribes from around the country converged on the Tulalip Indian Tribes' resort and casino for a \$605-a-head seminar on the regulatory, legal and social issues related to pot legalization.

That's a small fraction of the nation's 566 recognized tribes. Many attendees were from smaller tribes looking for a potential economic edge.

"A great deal more are considering this than I thought would be considering it," said Ken Meshigaud, chairman of the Hannahville Indian Community, a band of the Potawatomi Tribe on Michigan's Upper Peninsula. "From an economic standpoint, it may be a good venture the tribes can get into."



Tulalip Vice Chairman Les Parks called it "a dream of another point of self-sufficiency on our reservations."

"That's what marijuana can do for us," he said.

Tribes have been wrestling with the idea since the U.S. Justice Department announced that it wouldn't stand in their way if they want to approve pot for medical or recreational use.

The agency said tribes must follow the same law enforcement priorities laid out for states that legalize the drug, including keeping marijuana out of the hands of children and criminal elements.

The discussions are heating up: On Monday, about 200 tribal leaders attended a meeting of the National Congress of American Indians, which included a closed-to-the-press panel discussion with Justice Department officials on marijuana legalization, said Demetri Downing, a former prosecutor for the Tohono O'odham tribe in southern Arizona who now advises tribes on regulatory issues related to pot.

The topic also is on the agenda of a major tribal economic summit in Las Vegas next month.

"We have to take a look at it," said Seth Pearman, an attorney for the Flandreau Santee Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. "The economic opportunity is just astronomical — it would be almost negligent to miss out on this."

He said tribal leaders already are drafting regulations for a marijuana industry, and they toured some Washington state dispensaries on their trip.

The conference was organized by Robert Odawi Porter, a former president of the Seneca Nation in New York, and Seattle marijuana business attorneys Hilary Bricken and Robert McVay.

Porter noted that difficult legal issues remain, especially related to tribal sovereignty. About 17 states have some criminal jurisdiction over tribal lands. If tribes are in those states, and those states prohibit marijuana, tribal members could face state criminal prosecution if they legalize or regulate marijuana, he said.

Several tribes stressed they are proceeding cautiously and reluctant to outpace changes in state marijuana laws. For example, tribes might not want to legalize for recreational use if it's illegal off-reservation, said Chris Stearns, a Navajo and the chairman of the Washington State Gambling Commission.

"They can sell to non-Indians, but the second they leave the reservation they get arrested," Stearns said. "That's not a great business model."

The tribal council of the 3,200-member Hoopa Valley Tribe, in Northern California's famed Emerald Triangle, has requested recommendations from health, law enforcement and other tribal officials to consider the consequences of marijuana legalization, including whether it might jeopardize federal aid for health care, fire services or housing, said Councilman Brad Marshall.

Some tribes said they would first consider regulating cannabis for medical use. They said they were intrigued about the idea that making pot more accessible might help cut down on abuse of methamphetamine or prescription drugs among tribal members.

"We're looking at what the benefits are, not only with revenue but with the medical relief we can give to our elders," said Lewis Taylor, chairman of the St. Croix Tribe of Wisconsin.

Direct Link: <http://news.yahoo.com/native-american-tribes-converge-discuss-pot-legalization-184215040--finance.html>

The Power Of Native Voters ... Beginning Of A Powerful Trend

[Mark Trahant](#)

2/27/15

I have been [writing for years about the success](#) — well, at least mostly — of Native American voters. During recent presidential election cycles the turnout from Indian country is inspiring, helping to swing elections from Arizona to North Dakota.

And just last year [Alaska Native voters](#) helped dump [a hostile state governor](#) and replaced him with Gov. Bill Walker, an ally, as well as electing Byron Mallott, a Tlingit leader, as the Lt. Governor.

But do you want to know something really cool?

The demographic shift that reflects Native voting power is only beginning. What's more the landscape is changing faster than expected and should bring about dramatic changes in states as "red" as Alaska and Oklahoma.

A new report looks at the numbers and the results are stunning. In 1980 when Ronald Reagan was elected president the population of the United States was 80 percent white. Today that proportion stands at 63 percent and it's likely to be less than 44 percent by 2060. The report, "[The States of Change: Demographics and Democracy](#)" is a collaboration of the liberal Center for American Progress, the conservative American Enterprise Institute and demographer William H. Frey of the Brookings Institution. One

of the goals is to “document and analyze the challenges to democracy posed by the rapid demographic evolution from the 1970s to 2060.”



Mark Trahant

One lens that is particularly revealing: States where people of color are the majority. The report said: “Right now, there are only four majority-minority states: California, Hawaii, New Mexico, and Texas. But with the ongoing demographic transformation of the country, our States of Change projections find that this will become more and more common.” So in five years Maryland and Nevada will be in that category. Then by 2060 the number of majority-minority states will reach 22, including seven of the currently largest states, making up about two-thirds of the country’s population.

American Indians and Alaska Natives are very much a part of this new majority because we are younger and growing faster than an older white population.

Alaska is the ideal example. The report says the state will be majority, minority as soon as 2030. Alaska Native voters, Asian Americans, Hispanics and African Americans will make up more than half the population then and by 2040 nearly 60 percent.

Another state that’s about to change dramatically is Oklahoma. That state’s white population dropped 20 percentage points — from 87 percent to 67 percent — between 1980 and 2014. This means Oklahoma is likely to be a majority-minority state by 2045 and should be only 43 percent white by 2060.

Usually I am not please when I see demographic tables that lump the Native American category into the “other” category. But this report clearly identifies Native Americans as a significant development in that category. The report finds that South Dakota, Montana

and North Dakota are also seeing a rapid increase in the Native population — and potential voters.

So what do these trends mean for Indian country?

We are going to have more say. Or else.

Political parties and politicians must compete for American Indian and Alaska Native voters if they want to remain competitive. So it will not be enough to say that Native issues are a federal concern. Soon each state with a new majority of voters will need to adapt, being a better partner with tribal governments. The new voting majority means a better shot at Medicaid expansion to support the Indian health system or to improve state funding for tribal community colleges (a hot issue in Montana right now) because legislators are going to need to address these issues if they want to remain viable.

Of course none of these demographic trends represent a sure thing. Fact is we still have a gap between the Native population and the number of eligible voters (something the report says is shrinking). And Indian country doesn't turnout as many voters as is even possible now. But then again, being in the majority might change that. There's nothing better than winning elections.

Mark Trahant holds the [Atwood Chair at the University of Alaska Anchorage](#). He is an independent journalist and a member of The Shoshone-Bannock Tribes. For up-to-the-minute posts, download the free [Trahan Reports app for your smart phone or tablet](#).

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/02/27/power-native-voters-beginning-powerful-trend-159400>

Evo Morales champions indigenous rights abroad, but in Bolivia it's a different story

The president of Bolivia styles himself as a champion of his indigenous peoples. In reality, he has turned his back on them and aligned himself with the colonial elites.

February 27 2015, 1.30am EST

[Chuck Sturtevant](#)

Research postgraduate at University of Aberdeen



Affection for Bolivia's president depends very much on who you are.

Now that the dust has settled on Evo Morales' election to a third term as president of Bolivia, it is time to wonder what he is going to do with it. He certainly couldn't ask for more power. Last October's [landslide election](#) victory for his MAS (Movement to Socialism) party means that he once again has enough votes in congress to override the opposition parties.

At [last month's inauguration](#), which included a spectacle of indigenous power at the ancient archaeological site of [Tiwanaku](#), Morales used his speech to emphasise indigenous resistance, anti-capitalism and the environment.

Coming from an indigenous background himself, he rejected colonial notions that insist that, "to modernise and civilise us, indigenous peoples had to disappear from the Earth". He added: "We must defend life, save planet earth and finish off capitalism and imperialism."

The domestic contrast

Those were words primarily for an international audience, however. At home, Morales' popularity is based less on things like indigenous resistance or environmentalism than on his commitment to social welfare and infrastructure spending.

The benefits of these policies, financed by [hydrocarbon revenues](#), primarily from natural gas, have been distributed throughout broad sectors of the population. Morales' economic stewardship of Bolivia has also earned him [praise from](#) the likes of the IMF and the World Bank.

Yet this has come at [significant cost](#) to Bolivia's indigenous peoples, particularly in the Amazonian lowlands in the north and east of the country. The government has repeatedly stalled on land-titling for indigenous territories; created bureaucratic obstacles to the implementation of promised indigenous self-determination; and continues to pursue environmentally destructive projects on indigenous lands. In the most recent example, the Bolivian government is [keeping its options open regarding fracking](#) of shale gas and oil.

Moxos rising

I am currently undertaking fieldwork in the northern town of San Ignacio de Moxos, which has a population of around 15,000 and is one of the principal battlegrounds for indigenous rights in the lowlands. For most of Bolivian history, municipal politics in San Ignacio have been dominated by a handful of families. Though the population is overwhelmingly indigenous, with a majority of people identifying as Moxeños, a number of white families own the vast majority of private land.



Google Maps

Those in inherited positions of power are known as “patrón”, or “master”. Cowhands are referred to as “mozos”, roughly translated as “boys”, and they spend months at a time living on their patrones' ranches. This mutual dependence results in a multi-generational, racially marked system of labour exploitation in which entire families of indigenous peasants are tied to particular patrones.

Over the past three decades, Moxeños have made concerted efforts to overturn this system through political mobilisation. In the 1980s they were among the first indigenous groups to form organisations to represent their interests, playing a key role in bringing indigenous rights to a national stage. Their efforts were fundamental to the rise of Morales and his MAS party.

The parting of the ways

Within the past ten years, that mobilisation has gained momentum in San Ignacio itself. Indigenous leaders allied with MAS have achieved unprecedented political representation, winning the mayor's office twice, as well as several departmental and national legislative offices.

In the current municipal elections, though, the alliance between MAS and the organisations representing Moxeños seems to have encountered difficulties. I witnessed meetings in which these indigenous organisations negotiated a consensus for candidates for MAS with the party's national representatives.

These were then rejected days later in favour of members of the cattle-ranching elites, who have long dominated local politics through other parties. In other municipalities, similar top-down approaches to naming candidates have alienated local activists.

The direct cause of this estrangement between MAS and the indigenous organisations of Moxos was a [conflict over](#) the planned construction of a major road through the Isiboró-Securé Indigenous Territory and National Park (TIPNIS).



TIPNIS demonstrators in La Paz in 2011

The 2025 Patriotic Agenda

The TIPNIS conflict was widely reported in the international press and sparked a public rupture when Bolivian police [violently suppressed](#) indigenous marchers. But anti-indigenous tendencies in Morales' government began much earlier than that.

In 2007 and 2008 I carried out research with another anthropologist in the Amazonian foothills in the north of La Paz department in western Bolivia. This region is home to the Mositén indigenous people and their ancestral lands, as well as large numbers of Aymara and Quechua migrants from the highlands. In its population and history it is similar to the Chapare region, where Morales moved as a young adult and rose through the ranks of the of colonist unions.

In La Paz department, colonists and indigenous people have competed for access to land and natural resources for decades. Mositénés argue that their future depends on continued access to their ancestral land. Colonists argue that their future depends on their ability to extract wealth from the land and invest it in other productive activities.

Some observers linked the Mositénés' lower level of social development with their continued dependence on forest resources and unwillingness to engage in market investments. Many environmentalists and indigenous activists see such attitudes as crucial to efforts to preserve large tracts of forested land. Others see them as an obstacle to development and national progress.

The government's ambitious agricultural plans indicate that it shares the latter view. In 2013 Morales presented the "2025 Patriotic Agenda", a blueprint for development of the country tied to its 200th anniversary. The plan [calls for](#) nearly quadrupling the area of agricultural production in the country over the next ten years, from 3.5m to 13m hectares.

Such massive expansion will require a mechanised and industrial approach to agricultural production, involving the agro-industrial elites of Santa Cruz department in the east, home to Bolivia's biggest city. Several years ago the country's vice-president, Alvaro Garcia Linera, [publicly promised that](#) the state would invest \$6bn per year in agricultural production.

Morales' back is turned

The conclusion? While MAS's rise to power depended on the participation and support of indigenous organisations in the lowlands, it has since shifted allegiances. Now it measures its success in terms of national production.

Morales' natural allies in this effort are the "productive sectors", including traditional land-owning and cattle-ranching elites. Indigenous people who don't live up to this standard are unlikely to see the same favoured treatment.

The irony is this. While Morales proclaims himself a champion of indigenous resistance on an international stage, at home his government is avidly applying the very measures of progress and advancement that have been used against indigenous people throughout the history of colonial encounters.

Direct Link: <http://theconversation.com/evo-morales-champions-indigenous-rights-abroad-but-in-bolivia-its-a-different-story-38062>

Native American Adoption Rules Revised

Posted: Feb 28, 2015 9:08 AM Updated: Feb 28, 2015 9:08 AM



Charlie Taraboletti

Cherokee Nation leaders are lauding a guideline revision that could have impacted a bitter custody case in 2013.

The BIA's new guidelines prioritize early intervention - with services designed to prevent Native children from being removed from their homes.

The new guidelines also give state courts direction on how to locate family and tribal members for placement if a Native child can no longer safely remain in his or her own home.

Cherokee Principal Chief Bill John Baker says if these practices were employed in the Veronica Brown case, the child could have remained in the care of her family and her Cherokee community.

Throughout much of 2013, a major dispute centered on a Cherokee Nation member in Oklahoma who battled a South Carolina couple over custody of then-3-year-old Veronica.

- See more at: <http://bartlesvillerradio.com/pages/news/87322015/native-american-adoption-rules-revised#sthash.RDVcYGU3.dpuf>

'We get the kids back': Native American grandmother fights to preserve families

In South Dakota, 51% of children in foster care are Native American but one woman turned de facto legal counsellor is using the law to change that



Janice Howe at home, showing family pictures. The South Dakota grandmother turned her outrage into a mission to help families on reservations know their rights. Photograph: Sue Purchase

[Laura Rena Murray](#)

Monday 2 March 2015 17.16 GMT Last modified on Monday 2 March 2015 20.02 GMT

Sitting on the quiet plains of [South Dakota](#), the Crow Creek reservation is buried in snow. Janice Howe's tiny home, nested in a sparse enclave of houses, is a warm haven against the winter chill. She slips bits of dough into a sizzling pan as her granddaughter and nieces joyously chase one another. As the girls tumble over one another, Howe talks about her work: her role is to bring Native American children back to the reservation. They were, she says, stolen by the state – and the story starts with her own family.

“They take children away [from families] because there's no food in the house so I find a way to help them get food, keep their lights on, get their rent paid,” she says. “I remember that heartache. I don't want any other families to go through that.”

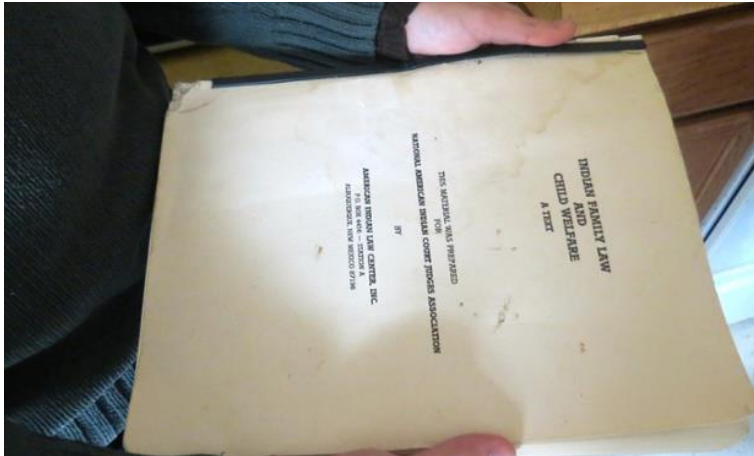
The former public health nurse is still outraged about the day, five years ago, that representatives from the state's department of social services (DSS) showed up on her daughter's doorstep without warning and hauled her grandkids away. Howe says the allegations of neglect were flimsy, and ultimately unsubstantiated. By placing her grandchildren in state foster homes outside the tribe, DSS also violated Howe's rights under the [Indian child welfare act](#) (ICWA), a federal law that is supposed to protect children of Native American tribes from state interventions and removals.

That law, experts say, is a way to shield native families from allegations of neglect based on poverty. It reads:

In judging the fitness of a particular family, many social workers, ignorant of Indian cultural values and social norms, make decisions that are wholly inappropriate in the context of Indian family life and so they frequently discover neglect or abandonment where none exists.

It took 21 months for Howe to get her grandchildren back – enough time for her to study and use the act to her advantage by transferring her case to a tribal court. Afterward, she started a support group on Facebook for Native American mothers and grandmothers who are fighting their state courts for custody of their children.

“Is very comforting to know that there are others who have walked down this path in regards to our children,” posts Brenda Charger, a Lakota grandmother from Pierre, South Dakota. “So thankful to have found this group helps to know that I am not alone in this deal. Wopila, ladies!”



Janice's copy of the IWCA. Photograph: Sue Purchase

After hearing about Howe's success, families across the state started asking for her help. Most of the parents and grandparents Howe counsels don't have legal representation and are unaware of their rights. As such, she has become a de facto legal counselor in her community. Howe says she has advised upward of a hundred families, answering calls from places as far away as California, Arizona and Tennessee at 1 or 2am.

In South Dakota, where Howe lives, 51% of [children in foster care](#) are Native American. A majority of them were removed from their families on charges of neglect.

"[The state of South Dakota] has instituted a system whereby they take long-term custody of Indian children based on allegations of neglect, sometimes abuse, without providing the parents a fair hearing," says Dana Hanna, an attorney for the Cheyenne River Sioux and the Oglala Sioux tribes. "The parents are simply not allowed to present any evidence on their own behalf in these hearings."

State violating the law?

Hanna is representing two South Dakota tribes in a class action lawsuit filed against state officials for systematically violating the act. Last week, the Bureau of Indian Affairs issues [updated](#) ICWA guidelines for state courts for the first time since 1979, specifically citing the lawsuit.

In December, the US attorney general, Eric Holder, announced a new initiative to "actively identify state-court cases where the US can file briefs opposing the unnecessary and illegal removal of Indian children from their families and their tribal communities". Holder promised to strengthen the act by ensuring compliance with the federal law with the caveat that "barriers erected over centuries of discrimination will not be surmounted overnight".

Many native families and advocates say the commitment is long overdue. After decades of assimilation-oriented policies, ICWA was passed in 1978. By then, one in four Native

American children were removed from their families and placed in boarding schools, adoption or foster care placements.

Despite the law's intentions, the removal rate of all American Indian children increased to 35% over the following decade, 85% of whom were placed in non-Indian homes. Thirty-five years later, these children remain staggeringly overrepresented in state foster care placements across the country.

Some cases have garnered considerable media attention over the last few years, including the [baby Veronica](#) case that went all the way to the supreme court in April 2013. But most remain messy battles fought in tiny state and county courtrooms, where poor families are subject to the capricious whims of judges and social workers who are woefully under-informed about the federal law or use state law to circumvent the act's requirements.

Facing such barriers can be daunting for native families, most too poor to afford legal representation. For many of them, Howe becomes a lifeline. When she learns about mothers in danger of losing their children or grandparents trying to regain custody of their grandkids, she does her best to reach out and offer advice. "Just that little bit of stuff I know," she says. "When I get involved in a case, we get the kids back."



On the Crow Creek reservation. Photograph: Sue Purchase

Howe keeps a thickly bound copy of the ICWA law, its pages highlighted with notes scribbled in the margins. When a mother or grandmother calls her for advice, she thumbs through the book to find useful passages to build their case.

As she cooks fry bread one afternoon, Howe turns to open a kitchen cabinet and pulls out her copy. She dictates sections into the receiver and encourages the caller to memorize it. The law becomes a tool to quote when they plead their case in front of a judge. Minutes later, she pulls out the golden puffs with tongs, setting them on to a brown paper bag to cool on the kitchen counter.

"Once I got a hold of this book," she thumps the cover, "that opened my eyes. It has helped me so much to say, this is what it says on this page, so why isn't this happening? I'll give you the number. You look it up and call me back."

Howe described one bewildered mother who contacted her after the sheriff and social workers took her son away when she brought him to the hospital. Andrea White Hat worried when her son, sick with a fever, began simultaneously vomiting and had diarrhea, especially considering he was born with pontocerebellar hypoplasia and required a feeding tube. She feared he was in danger of becoming dehydrated. Indeed, by the time she was able to hitch a ride to the Sanford Children's clinic in Sioux Falls, SD, about 250 miles from the Rosebud Reservation where she lived, the baby had lost weight.

"[The doctor] reported to the DSS that I didn't feed him that much," she says, "but I do feed him on a schedule of every three hours, even throughout the night."

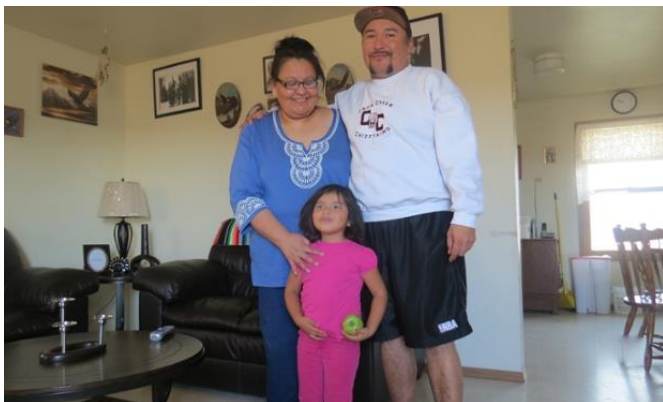
The 20-year-old called Howe in a panic and told her the state had taken him from her at the hospital, accusing her of neglect and saying she was incapable of meeting his needs.

While Howe started making a round of phone calls, White Hat followed her son. By the time Howe heard from her again, she was camped out near the foster home where state officials placed her baby.

"She hitchhiked to Coleman, lived under a tree, starved for a whole week – just to see her baby," Howe says, shaking her head. "You can't tell me that's a mom who isn't hurt; who's determined to keep her baby?"

Andrea White Hat still can't talk about the day her son was taken from her at the hospital without crying. It is hard to find the words to describe what happened because no matter what way she looks at it, she still doesn't understand why they stole her baby.

"[Janice has] been helping me learn what to do," White Hat says in a voice laced with grief and gratitude.



Janice and her family. Photograph: Sue Purchase

The premise of ICWA supports the importance of preserving native customs and society. Even if the parents' rights are ultimately terminated, the law requires children be first placed with relatives, within their tribe or with an Indian family, to preserve their cultural identity and community. Tribes also have a right to intervene in custody decisions and can transfer jurisdiction of a child welfare case to tribal court.

“Culturally, we don’t have a concept of termination of parental rights,” says Nona Etsitty, a Navajo Nation tribal court advocate. She has actively helped bring children back to the reservation, whom she describes as grappling with internalized racism adopted from mainstream stereotypes of Indians.

“Children lose their identity when they are placed outside the family and they begin to identify with the aggressor,” she explains. “It changes how they think of their tribe and family. [Children](#) raised by outside families, if asked what they think of the tribes, they think they are dumb.”

Damaging stereotypes further alienate children, she attests, which results in shockingly high suicide rates in her community. According to the National Congress of American Indians, one in six Indians attempts suicide before turning 18. Etsitty argues the dissolution of American Indian identities has been gradual, and most effectively achieved by the destruction of native families.

Political game v culture clash

Opponents of ICWA argue that preserving cultural heritage should not factor so heavily in adoption or foster care placements and claim the new initiative will do more harm than good.

“It’s not about the kids, it’s really about maintaining tribal sovereignty,” says Elizabeth Morris, chairwoman of the Christian Alliance for Indian Child Welfare. She describes ICWA as a political game, a way to preserve “tribal kingdoms and get federal money. They get to meet with the president ... If they seriously wanted to protect children, they would have to send them off the rez and give them to white foster homes.”

Morris’s organization is one of several working to dismantle ICWA by lobbying legislators, saying that the law is playing politics with families’ lives. “ICWA goes after the grandkids,” she explains. “When tribal governments want the child, there’s nothing you can do about it except get ready to hand him over.” The group also helps non-native adoptive or foster parents seeking custody of American Indian children by paying for legal consultations with attorneys well-versed in circumventing the act.

Morris’s husband was born on the Leech Lake reservation, which makes her children half Ojibwe. Children raised on the reservations fare poorly, she says, highlighting dismal rates of alcoholism, homicide and sexual violence on many reservations.

“Nobody’s pining for Indian country,” Morris elaborates. “Life on the rez isn’t Dances with Wolves. We’ve got to quit this fantasyland.”

Howe disagrees, saying the state-run child welfare systems do far more harm than good to native children. The consequences are evident when considering how many American Indians in state prisons were formerly wards of the state as children. “It just blows my mind, every time someone calls and I start talking to them, hearing their stories,” she

says. “I’m just like ‘were you in foster care?’ and they say ‘yeah.’ That says a lot, you know?”

Howe worries about the difficulties American Indians face when they return to reservations after adoption, trying to reconnect with their families after years, sometimes decades, of separation. “The Mormons and missionaries took a lot of our kids,” says Navajo Nation’s Etsitty. “The majority of them come home to look for their family.”

‘Never give up your rights’

It is hard for the families to keep fighting. Often it takes years to get children back once the state takes custody. White Hat has since moved back to the Rosebud reservation, hoping to get her case transferred to tribal court instead of remaining in the state’s jurisdiction. The young mother is a full-time student at Sinte Gleska University and refuses to voluntarily terminate her parental rights. “Never give up your rights,” she says. “Never give up on your children. Stay strong.”

Her son remains in state care, and she hitch-hikes 120 miles to Chamberlain once a month to visit him. Every three months, she says, the foster family will bring him to the reservation for a couple hours so she can visit with him.

White Hat’s Facebook profile is a montage of photos with her son, recording every visit they spend together. The majority show them cheek-to-cheek, cuddling on couches or snuggled in bed, and the accompanying posts detail the nuances of caretaking through sleepless nights or reflect on the emptiness of his departure, the too quiet house in his absence.

“By now I thought she might have given up but she hasn’t,” says Howe, who is proud of White Hat’s persistence. “That’s his *mother*, you know?”

Direct Link: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/02/foster-care-native-american-reservation-law-grandmother>

Pro-Redskins group brings in out-of-town Native Americans who support Redskins mascot

2 Native Americans say many see term as a tribute



Joe L. Milk, an Ogala Sioux and gaming inspector at a casino in Martin, S.D., visited Buffalo to express his support for the Lancaster School District's use of the name Redskins for the districts athletic teams. He was given a "Once a Redskin, Always a Redskin" shirt by a Lancaster pro-Redskins group late Monday.

By [Karen Robinson](#) | News Staff Reporter

on March 2, 2015 - 11:38 PM

On the eve of a community forum on whether the Lancaster School District should keep or drop the controversial Redskins mascot, a pro-Redskins group flew two Native Americans to Buffalo to help their cause.

The message: That the Redskins nickname is a tribute to Native Americans and a source of pride, and should be kept in place at Lancaster Central High School, as it has been for nearly 70 years.

"I came out here on my own free will. I'm going to come out and save the Redskins," said Joe L. Milk, 33, an Ogala Sioux and gaming inspector at a casino in Martin, S.D., and who lives on his tribe's reservation in the same town. "There's plenty of Native Americans who don't find it racist at all ... I want to help Lancaster save their name and keep the tradition going."

An anonymous donor who is a Lancaster graduate paid for Milk's flight, hotel and meals, according to a pro-Redskins committee member. At the Buffalo Niagara International Airport on Monday afternoon, Milk wore a Washington Redskins football team knit cap with a Native American emblem and donned a "Once a Redskin, Always a Redskin" T-shirt handed to him by the Lancaster pro-Redskins group late Monday.

"I don't find it offensive. It's the right word to use," Milk said.

Also flown here at the expense of the donor was Mark One Wolf Yancey of Connecticut, who is the administrator of an online group called Native American Redskins Fans and who has been featured in a video made by lobbyists for the NFL's Washington Redskins team.

Milk said that Yancey contacted him about the Lancaster issue.

Tuesday night at 7 p.m., school leaders are hosting a community forum at the high school to hear from both sides. Before the forum begins, the pro-Redskins group plans to hold a rally at 6:30 p.m. outside the school.

The district appears to be trying to phase out the Redskins name. In the last couple of years, it has stopped ordering the Redskins name on school-issued athletic uniforms. A new football scoreboard does not display a mascot, and the mascot has not appeared at any sports events this year. A digitized welcome sign in front of the high school still occasionally flashes the Redskins name.

Tensions seem to be running on overdrive over the issue, between Monday's late afternoon pro-Redskins news conference at the airport, followed a few hours later by a school district statement spelling out strict ground rules for the forum.

Among the 12 ground rules for the session, the district said people need to show mutual respect and "check egos at the door," "accept differences of opinion" and "patiently absorb what others are saying" to just name a few. Anyone in blatant violation of the rules may be asked to leave.

Both sides will give opening statements before attendees who had to pre-register with the district are broken up into smaller groups for discussion and then report back to the School Board prior to closing remarks. The session is expected to last until at least 9:30 p.m.

The pro-Redskins group had the village hang a "Save The Redskin Tradition" banner above Central Avenue two weeks ago.

The banner is symbolic of how serious the divide is within the community over the Redskin issue.

But the School Board, which began studying the matter months ago, and Superintendent Michael J. Vallely are in no hurry to make a decision. In fact, the district said no decision will be made for the 2015-16 school year.

It remains a hot-button topic, given the controversy swirling over the National Football League's Washington Redskins team name, and in New York State, where Lancaster is just one of three remaining school districts with their Redskins mascot in place.

In Lancaster, the Native American population totals 0.2 percent. Still, Native Americans whom the district brought to a round-table discussion in January said the name is a form of ethnic stereotyping and is racist.

Earlier Monday, former Lancaster School Board member Brenda Christopher told media that many Native Americans across the country have reached out to the pro-Redskins group to help in the effort to preserve the mascot.

“We took two of them up on it. We want our School Board to hear us,” Christopher said. “We’ve been the Redskins for 68 years. It’s never been an issue. All of the sudden, it’s an issue.”

Christopher said the Redskins group “could have very easily drove down the Thruway and brought in” local Native Americans who support retaining the Redskins mascot.

Also Monday, Dennis Yellowhorse Jones who grew up in Navajo Nation near Gallup, N.M., and runs three Navajo-owned businesses, issued a statement to the Lancaster School District supporting the Redskins moniker as a tribute to Native Americans and also slamming John Kane, a radio talk show host who has told the district the Redskins’ nickname is offensive and should be changed.

Both Yancey and Milk are meeting Tuesday afternoon with Vallely and School Board President Kenneth Graber in a closed-door session. Vallely declined to comment Monday.

Direct Link: <http://www.buffalonews.com/city-region/lancaster/pro-redskins-group-brings-in-out-of-town-native-americans-who-support-redskins-mascot-20150302>

Luger: ‘Sing Our Rivers Red’ Brings Awareness of Missing, Murdered Indigenous Women in U.S.

[Chelsey Luger](#)

3/3/15

By now, you may have seen the hashtag #MMIW. It stands for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. The number of North American Indigenous women who have gone missing or have been murdered in the past decade is approaching several thousand. It’s alarming, to say the least, and nothing short of an urgent matter. The problem is real, and it deserves more attention.

A quick search of the term “Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women” right here on *ICTMN* will help explain the gravity of the situation. You’ll find a host of articles dating as far back as 2010 which highlight some of the events, progress, and struggles surrounding the issue. A scan of these headlines will also reveal another factor: Though the problem transcends borders, awareness of MMIW is much more prevalent in Canada than stateside.

But that's changing.

In February, a group of young and incredibly powerful Native women – Hannabah Blue, Tanaya Winder, and Patty Stonefish – planned and hosted a week of events in Fargo-Moorhead with the purpose of spreading awareness of the missing and murdered on this side of the border. The week of events was titled, 'Sing Our Rivers Red.'

With hundreds of attendees and participants, it was a resounding success, and it's safe to say they achieved their goal of spreading awareness and uniting disparate voices.

Events included a hip-hop concert with performances by Frank Waln, Mic Jordan and Young Jibwe; documentary screenings; poetry readings; an earring art exhibition; an Arming Sisters self-defense workshop; and finally a march on Valentine's Day where dozens braved the bitter prairie temperatures to show support for the cause.

The organizers caught the attention of area officials, too. Mayors of the cities of Fargo, Moorhead, Dillworth and West Fargo listened to their presentation at a Fargo Native American Commission meeting, and immediately signed a proclamation acknowledging February 14 an official awareness day for murdered and missing indigenous women, calling for more resources to "address the colonial gender based violence."

I sat down with Hannabah, Tanaya and Patty in order to learn more about their efforts. Here's a little bit of that conversation.

Q: I'm intrigued by the title you chose for the week of events: Sing Our Rivers Red (SORR). What does it mean? How did you come up with the name?

Hannabah: The Red River runs north right in between Fargo-Moorhead and all the way up to Manitoba. There's an effort there in Winnipeg called "drag the red" where the community members come together to look for MMIW. They drag the river because they don't get a lot of support from law enforcement. We want these events to support – not detract from – what's going on up in Canada, and so the name "Sing Our Rivers Red" is an homage to that effort. It's strength-based. We can use our voices for healing. We can sing our rivers red.

Tanaya: And it's not just the Red River, but water is what connects us all. Water of life is everywhere. There are bodies of water that we need to survive, but at the same time, we are all drowning. As Indigenous women we are drowning in injustice - but if we can infuse that healing through our voice and whatever it is that makes our spirits sing, the source of the hurt can be the source of the healing.

Q: What do you hope will come of these events?

Patty: We're hoping for recognition. There's no recognition in the U.S. yet about our missing and murdered Indigenous women. The data and resources aren't even very solid, but the estimated figure is around 1,000 MMIW in the U.S. since 2000.

Acknowledgement is a huge step forward. It's way less than what we need, but it's a huge step.

Hannabah: We address similar issues in the U.S. that are a bit more visible like the Violence Against Women Act, but we want to show that all of these things are related and we need to address everything - not just small pieces of the puzzle.



Hannabah Blue - activist, journalist, and public health advocate. One of the SORR organizers. Photo courtesy Hannabah Blue.

Tanaya: People are hungry and ready for awareness and acknowledgement. Recognition, awareness, action and solidarity are the goals. What's happening this week is a microcosm of what *can* happen. We need to attack the issue from all angles, and whatever your gift is you can use it to speak to the issue, whether that's music or poetry or some other passion. It's giving a chance for community healing.

Q: Why do you suppose this issue goes ignored by the majority?

Hannabah: It's related to a bigger topic – this underlying notion that Native women are expendable. We're objects. We're not important. And where does that come from? Well, there's a broader idea in society about Native women being sexualized, and that's a result of colonization, patriarchy, and a lot of other things that are counter to our traditions.

Q: Patty, tell me more about the mission of your organization, Arming Sisters, and how your self-defense courses are geared differently.

Patty: One thing you always hear about in relation to women's self-defense is this umbrella of prevention. They tell you "don't be a statistic," "watch your back," and they give all these rules we should follow about what not to wear, where not to go, and how not to act. My view on women's self-defense is not at all like that. My view is that we

shouldn't have to change anything about ourselves or act any differently than men should have to act. Being attacked is never our fault - it's the perpetrator's fault. Self-defense is an empowerment tool ... self-empowerment. I hate it when people say they're going to empower other people because when you say that, that in and of itself takes power away. Due to everything going on in our world on a daily basis, little parts of us get pulled away constantly. It's about coming back to the center, and that's what makes us strong. Women's self-defense is something we all already have inside of us, it's just about reawakening that natural instinct.

Q: Tell me about the earring exhibit. I saw your request calling for donations of single earrings to represent women who have gone missing or murdered.

Tanaya: We received 3,405 earrings from 45 different states and 6 provinces in Canada along with 400 individual letters.



SORR earring art exhibition at North Dakota State University Memorial Gallery. Photo courtesy Tanaya Winder.

Q: Wow! And if you think about it, each one of those earrings represents at least one conversation. That's a lot of conversations... What will come next?

Tanaya: We want that momentum to continue and to encourage people to take parts of it to their own communities. The earring exhibit will travel and keep growing, and we're thinking of ideas for more events as well. It's still evolving. Other communities are mobilizing around it, so we hope to see these types of events continue.

For more information, go to singourriversred.wordpress.com and armingsisters.org. You can also go to Sing Our Rivers Red's Tumblr page by clicking [here](#).



Chelsey Luger. Photo courtesy Eller Bonifacio.

Chelsey Luger is Anishinaabe and Lakota from North Dakota. She hopes to be a strong link in a long chain of ancestors and descendants by spreading ideas for health and wellness. Follow her on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#). Ideas for articles? Email her: wellforculture@gmail.com.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/03/03/luger-sing-our-rivers-red-brings-awareness-missing-murdered-indigenous-women-us-159443>

The Art of Indigenous Resistance: Inspiring the Protection of Mother Earth

By Corina Bernstein, [TC Daily Planet](#)
March 02, 2015

Photos from Art of Indigenous Resistance at All My Relations Gallery.

All photos taken by Corina Bernstein



[All My Relations gallery](#) held an opening on Friday for their current exhibition, “The Art of Indigenous Resistance: Inspiring the Protection of Mother Earth”, a traveling exhibition of work by 20 Indigenous artists co-curated by All My Relations Gallery and [Honor the Earth](#). The exhibit track’s and highlights Honor the Earth’s 31 year history of community outreach and resistance. Along with wild rice soup being served to attendees,

with berry sauce and a delicious white bean spread, the gallery opening hosted Winona LaDuke, speaking about Indigenous resistance and Honor the Earth, the organization she co-founded.

Sophie Hunter, one of the younger artists present at 11 years old, proudly showed me her piece before the speakers began, entitled “Treated?”, which asks the viewer the question, “If We Look The Same Inside Why Are We Treated.....”

A variety of voices were represented at the exhibit. Ashley Fairbanks, Jay Bad Heart Bull, & Graci Horne welcomed everyone on behalf of The Native American Community Development Corporation and All My Relations Gallery. Votan, Lucie Skjefte, & Gregg Deal discussed how their work was articulating an inherent connection between earth and humanity and about environmental destruction. Art, they said, brings about change and social consciousness.

“This work is powerful because it shows a more nuanced, real picture of indigenous art,” said Winona LaDuke to the audience in closing. “I want to go from a tipi to a tesla, painting the vision of where we're going. Art gives us hope, helping us remember how beautiful we are, which calls us to be that beautiful.”

Arriving just before she was slated to speak, Winona LaDuke swept into the opening with her usual excitement and self-assured presence. LaDuke talked about the importance of stories, and telling those stories through mediums such as Ledger Art, one of her preferred art genres. There were several such Ledger Art pieces in the exhibit, such as [Michael Horse](#)’s “Last Breath of the Black Snake” (2014), which LaDuke noted Horse had created when Honor the Earth went to Washington, D.C. to fight the Keystone Pipeline (“the black snake”).

Direct Link: <http://www.tcdailyplanet.net/arts/2015/03/02/art-indigenous-resistance-inspiring-protection-mother-earth>

Ontario may appeal court ruling that allowed aboriginal girl to abandon chemotherapy

[Tom Blackwell](#) | March 2, 2015 | Last Updated: Mar 3 9:41 AM ET



Tehaweratennyon Bomberry, 5, of Six Nations attends a conference in Hamilton Feb. 26 attended by doctors, native representatives and the parents of the late Makayla Sault, and J.J., the two aboriginal girls with leukemia pulled out of chemotherapy to undergo native healing and alternative health care.

The Ontario government has opened the possibility of appealing a court ruling — which allowed a young aboriginal girl with leukemia to abandon chemotherapy — after an unusual, belated decision to get involved in the contentious case.

The province has obtained a lengthy extension to the appeal period for a ruling that said the girl's family had a constitutional right to treat her with traditional native remedies, and in the process reject conventional therapy.

It now has until March 13 to intervene and challenge that decision in the Court of Appeal.

For the time being, though, the government says it is involved in talks with the family over the “most respectful and effective ways” to care for the girl, whose identity is subject to a publication ban.

After Justice Gethin Edward issued his decision last Nov. 14, Hamilton Health Sciences Centre, the hospital that launched the case, announced it would not appeal.

But in December and January, the Attorney General's Ministry contacted the parties involved to ask if they would agree to extending the appeal deadline, sources say. They all consented, as allowed under court rules.



Six Nations supporter Jamie Clause, left, looks on Six Nations Chief Ava Hill, right, and Chief Bryan LaForme, centre, of the Mississauga New Credit out front of Brantford's Ontario Court of Justice after a judge dismissed the CAS request to force a 11 year old aboriginal girl to receive chemotherapy, Nov. 13, 2014.

The timing of the province's entry into the case, after the trial was completed and the judge had ruled, seems "very rare," said Larry Chartrand, an expert on constitutional and aboriginal law at the University of Ottawa.

"I don't even know if there's a precedent for it," Prof. Chartrand said.

He said he supports Judge Edward's ruling, but believes the province has strong grounds for arguing the appeal court should hear the case. It appears no one officially asked if the government wanted to intervene at the trial level, and such notification is required whenever a provincial law is challenged as unconstitutional, Prof. Chartrand noted.

A spokeswoman for Madeleine Meilleur, Ontario's attorney general, would reveal little about the government's intentions, saying merely that the appeal period had been extended by agreement.

"The family and the government of Ontario are continuing to discuss the most respectful and effective ways to provide for this child's health care," said Christine Burke, a spokeswoman for the minister.

The case revolves around the second of two Southern Ontario girls, both 11 and from neighbouring reserves, diagnosed last year with leukemia. Both started undergoing chemotherapy but then pulled out, saying they wanted to pursue aboriginal remedies instead.

They also attended a Florida alternative-health clinic, which treats advanced cancer patients with vegan, raw-food diets and other unproven therapies.

A local child-welfare agency refused requests to apprehend the children so they could be forced back into chemo. One of the girls, Makayla Sault from New Credit First Nation, died last month.

The hospital took Brant Family and Children's Services to court last fall over its decision regarding the second girl, a resident of Six Nations reserve.

Judge Edward declined to force her into chemotherapy, saying the girl's mother has a right under the Constitution to pursue traditional medicine, even if it is not validated by "the Western medical paradigm."

The first hint of the government's unusual insertion into the case came last Thursday, when the mother of the second patient, known as J.J., said the case was still up in the air.

"I have met with provincial government representatives who have been respectful and compassionate," she told a forum on aboriginal health care in Hamilton. "The issue is not whether traditional medicine will be respected, but how it will be respected, and how and when the two systems can work together."

Prof. Chartrand said he believes Judge Edward's decision was ultimately solid and "very progressive." But he said if the province decides to intervene, it might target the fact that the judge — after deciding that forcing J.J. back into chemo would violate her mother's constitutional rights — did not then rule whether doing so was a reasonable limit on those rights.

By coincidence, a similar argument was advanced last November by a member of the Court of Appeal — when he was still a Western University law professor.

"The judge hasn't done that balancing," Grant Huscroft told TV Ontario before being appointed to the court. "He's said only, 'There's an aboriginal right here, and therefore we're done.' And that I think is a mistake."

Direct Link: <http://news.nationalpost.com/2015/03/02/ontario-may-appeal-court-ruling-that-allowed-aboriginal-girl-to-abandon-chemotherapy/>

Hollywood horror: Actress' death highlights Native American women's woes

Actress Misty Upham wanted to be a voice for the voiceless, but her death underscored police-Native American tensions

March 4, 2015 2:00PM ET

by [Sarah Hoye @Sarah_Hoye](#) & [George Lerner @geolerner](#)

AUBURN, Wash. – Charles Upham last saw his daughter alive on Oct. 5.

His daughter, 32-year-old Native American actress Misty Upham, was at the height of her career, having starred alongside Meryl Streep and Julia Roberts in 2013's "August: Osage County." Her breakout role came in 2008 with the award-winning film "Frozen River" featuring Melissa Leo.

But there was a dark side to Misty Upham that not many outside of her family knew about.

"She would self-medicate. She would use alcohol," Charles Upham told America Tonight. "She would have these psychotic episodes where her behavior would change and she'd go off and say things and she won't remember that."

Her father said she was behaving strangely the day she went missing.

"She started to kind of be aggressive, argumentative about non-issues," he said.

She had been drinking heavily at their home outside Seattle near Mount Rainier, he said. With her upset, erratic and in need of medication for her anxiety, Charles Upham called police for help.

"Next thing she went in the other room and she says, 'I'm leaving. I'm not going to let them take me.' She said, 'Don't worry about me.' And then she walked out," he recalled. "She just went down the stairs. She shut the door. And I was like five seconds behind her. I went out and I looked and I didn't see her down the stairs so I went down and I didn't see her anywhere."

It was an all-too-familiar episode for the Uphams, who are members of the Blackfeet Nation. The cycle would repeat itself: Misty lashing out, a call to police, a brief hospital stay. Only this time, things were different.

When police arrived that Sunday, Charles Upham said he was ordered back inside while officers searched the apartment.

"I kept telling them, 'You guys need to help me find her.' I said, 'She really needs to be in the hospital.' They just said, 'Well, if we see her, we'll bring her to the hospital,' and they said, 'We'll keep an eye out for her,'" he said. "Then they drove away."

He pressed the police to search for his missing daughter, but they never canvassed beyond the family's apartment complex on the Muckleshoot Indian Reservation.

Charles Upham officially reported her missing the next day.

"It's very tragic what happened to her and how it happened," he said. "What made it worse is the fact that we didn't get any help."

Misty Upham's death is a high-profile example of an alarming trend: Native American women are murdered or go missing at a higher rate than any other ethnic group. On some reservations, women are murdered at a rate 10 times more than the national average.

According to the [Justice Department](#), 61 percent of Native American women have been assaulted in their lifetimes, and most victims say their attacker was non-Native.

The police perspective

Cmdr. Mike Hirman of the Auburn Police Department said officers didn't mount a full-fledged search for Misty Upham because her disappearance [hadn't met the criteria](#) for Washington state's Endangered Missing Person Advisory.

An EMPA is triggered when a person vanishes under unexplained or suspicious circumstances or when the person is believed to be in danger because of "mental disability."

"Her disappearance did not follow or meet the criteria of an endangered missing person," Hirman said. "She didn't have a mental illness. Yeah, you can say that she had some depression issues. She may have been drinking at the time but that's not mental illness, OK?"

When asked how he would define mental illness in the context of creating an EMPA, Hirman said she did not meet "the criteria."

"I know that we were called four other times and Redmond (police) was called one other time and so we're trying to determine, you know, does she meet the criteria? No, she does not, and even if she did meet the criteria, nothing could have been done to help because there was no vehicle," he explained. "There was nothing to flash, if you will, on a billboard or on a road sign ... a picture. But by this time, sadly I can say that she was already down in the ravine. And so there was really nothing that could have been done with an EMPA."

Across America, many Native Americans say they suffer from [longstanding disparities in criminal justice](#). Concerned that officials didn't consider her disappearance suspicious, Charles Upham turned to friends and family for help finding his daughter.

"We went from the doorstep where she went missing, and all we did was think about where we would run, if we had to find someplace to hide," said Robert Upham, a relative who organized the family's search party. "Now that's all the cops had to do. All the cops needed to find out the urgency from a mom and dad."

Volunteers discovered her body at the bottom of a 150-foot embankment nearby, 11 days after she went missing.

“We had no help from the police. We would not have found her if we didn’t try whatever the best we could offer,” Robert Upham said. “Apparently what we had to offer is better than those who had years and years of professional help.”

It took rescuers five hours to retrieve Misty Upham’s body from the bottom of the ravine.



Misty Upham

According to the King County Medical Examiner's Office, Misty Upham died of blunt-force injuries to her head and torso the same day she went missing.

“It was sad all around, only because she died. That's terrible news and it's unfortunate,” Hirman said. “If there's any reprieve to this at all for us, it was the medical examiner's report where they indicated that, that pretty much when she disappeared is when she died.”

Auburn police say her fall down the cliff killed her and that there's no indication of foul play. But police can’t say exactly what happened. Her death remains under investigation.

Charles Upham insists his daughter didn’t take her own life or fall by accident. He told America Tonight he was informed by a family friend that a witness – who is afraid to speak with police – says two men beat his daughter and threw her down the ravine. Auburn police say that lead went nowhere.

“I believe she was murdered,” he said. “I'm going to find out who did it and make sure that justice is served.”

'A voice for the voiceless'

Disturbed by the trend that American Indian go missing or murdered at higher rates than other group, Lauren Chief Elk co-founded the [Save Wiyabi Project](#), an advocacy group dedicated to addressing violence against Native American women. The group also tracks disappearances and murders of indigenous women in the United States and Canada.

“People don't want to talk about it, especially some of our native elders,” she said. “It is way too hard to even say words [like] rape, sexual assaults, molestation.”

Chief Elk hosts seminars across the country, including a recent one at Yale University, to raise awareness about these missing and murdered women.

Since the [mapping project](#) launched in 2012, Chief Elk has tracked more than 1,000 deaths and disappearances of indigenous women. When indigenous women disappear, she said, their cases often get little coverage – and their identities can easily be erased.

“Even with Misty being a very well-known, prominent actress, even with that position, there was not an outcry or even awareness of what had even happened to her,” Chief Elk said. “But it's part of also what is 'missing white woman syndrome' – what we know of as in the United States – where there is great moral panic when white woman's victimhood and safety is threatened and compromised. We have a very much deeper reaction and response to that than we do women of color and transgender women.”



Misty Upham was remembered during this year's Oscars.via Oscars.org

At the Oscars last month, [Misty Upham was remembered](#) among those Hollywood had lost in the past year.

As the family mourns, Charles Upham wants the FBI to investigate Misty's death. The family is also [raising funds](#) to hire a private investigator and offer rewards for good leads.

“I’m fortunate enough to know that I found my daughter ... whereas some of these other families out there, their loved ones are still missing,” Charles Upham said. “It really needs to be addressed you know. And this is one of the things that Misty wanted to do was become a voice for the voiceless. And now she's become voiceless.”

Direct Link: <http://america.aljazeera.com/watch/shows/america-tonight/articles/2015/3/4/hollywood-horror-actress-death-highlights-native-american-womens-woes.html>

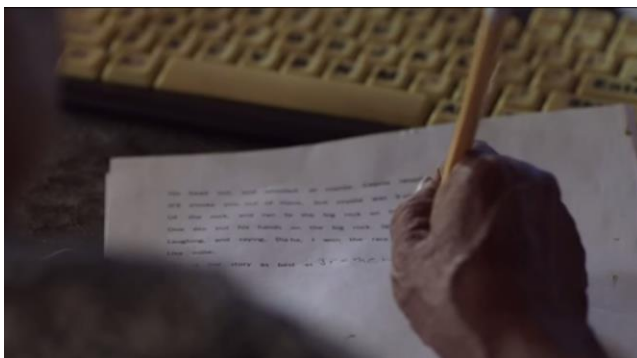
On the Brink of Extinction, an Indigenous Language Gets Its First Dictionary

by [Allison Meier](#) on March 3, 2015



Still from “Marie’s Dictionary” (screenshots by the author for Hyperallergic)

Despite their important role in strengthening cultures and communities, languages are fragile things. When generation stop speaking them to their children, when spoken words aren’t recorded in writing, there’s no way to retrieve the knowledge and rhythm of life that is lost. The last fluent speaker of Wukchumni, a language spoken by a Yokuts tribe with only a couple hundred members in California, has spent seven years working with her daughter on the language’s first dictionary.



Still from “Marie’s Dictionary”

A short documentary film by Emmanuel Vaughan-Lee of the [Global Oneness Project](#) profiles Marie Wilcox and her daughter Jennifer in their quiet San Joaquin Valley home. Recently [shared by National Geographic](#) on their Short Film Showcase, “[Marie’s Dictionary](#)” is an intimate look at how one person suddenly found herself at the end of hundreds of years of history, and late in life began to write it all down on scraps of paper, teaching herself how to use a computer to transcribe the words, and recording them orally with her grandson.

The film states that in the US there are more than 130 endangered indigenous languages, some on the edge of extinction. On its [Enduring Voices interactive platform](#) on vanishing languages, *National Geographic* states that by the year 2100 “more than half of the more than 7,000 languages spoken on Earth — many of them not yet recorded — may disappear, taking with them a wealth of knowledge about history, culture, the natural environment, and the human brain.”

Wilcox, born in 1933, learned Wukchumni from her grandparents, but even by that generation many indigenous people in the United States weren’t talking in their tribal tongues. Assimilation efforts and [boarding schools](#) started in the 19th century that were strictly English-speaking obliterated much of that knowledge. And recent bills like last year’s [Native American Languages Reauthorization Act](#) and [Native Language Immersion Student Achievement Act](#) failed to get much traction in Congress. There are some successful academic initiatives, though. The [Ojibwe People’s Dictionary Project](#) was started by faculty and students in the Department of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota and receives support from the National Science Foundation’s [Endangered Languages program](#). Some colleges include endangered languages in their curricula, like the University of Oklahoma — which, [since 1991](#), has offered courses in languages including Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, and Kiowa. But much of the effort to preserve and recover these languages is grassroots and comes down to people like Wilcox working in their homes or in community centers.

“I’m uncertain about my language and who wants to keep it alive,” Wilcox admits in the video. “No one seems to want to learn, it’s sad.” And without much legislative and widespread support, languages like hers may turn to silence, without anyone hearing them go.

Direct Link: <http://hyperallergic.com/178685/on-the-brink-of-extinction-an-indigenous-language-gets-its-first-dictionary/>

Fashion Exploiting Native Wear Is Racist

[Karlene Hunter](#)

3/5/15

There has been a lot of media lately regarding cultural insensitivity and/or ignorance at the Oscars and New York City’s Fashion Week. There’s always media attention when

celebrities are involved. But this is nothing new to the Native community regarding its language, its art, its traditions and now, its products.

Even here at Native American Natural Foods, we are not immune to this veiled form of racism. We see it. We know it. And we are not going to stay silent.

These copycats create fashion designs stolen directly from Native artists. They name and create logos for their products using Native spiritual icons. They create pretend "tribes," invoking Native spirituality where none exists. These "products," designed only to cash in at the expense of Native creativity, ignore the resources they are siphoning away from people who are suffering.

These practices totally disrespect Native American people and tribes. This is a discreet form of racism and a not-so-discreet form of exploitation.

Here are a handful of examples (out of many) in just the last year:

[Bethany Yellowtail 'Gutted' by Crow Design on Dress at New York Fashion Week](#)

[Ralph Lauren Apologizes for Native American Ads](#)

[Oklahoma Gov's Daughter: A Woman in a Headdress Is 'a Beautiful Thing'](#)

[Pharrell Williams Sorry for Wearing First Nation Headdress](#)

And even in our own industry, knockoffs of our traditional foods are being marketed with Native iconography and language. They pretend to be "inspired" by Native recipes and then intentionally wrap them in a Native fiction. There are more on the way, some of them backed by millions of advertising dollars in an attempt to crowd out Native originators.

After 100 years of oppression, being placed on reservations, our total society and social systems taken away (language, spirituality, economy, land) Native people have finally come to a point in history where we have learned a whole new system and have begun to rebuild our society.

So now, appropriators and exploiters are trying to take that away from us again. We see it. We know it. And we are not going to stay silent.
Because history does repeat itself, if we let it.

Karlene Hunter is CEO of Native American Natural Foods and CEO of Lakota Express Inc. She co-founded Lakota Express in 1996 and Native American Natural Foods, home of the Tanka Bar, in 2007 and serves as CEO for both companies. Hunter has a Master's Degree in Leadership/Management from Oglala Lakota College and more than 25 years of experience in customer care, direct marketing fundraising and management.

Read more at <http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/03/05/fashion-exploiting-native-wear-racist>

Another Voice: “Redskin” mascot is offensive and promotes a hostile learning environment.

on March 5, 2015 - 12:01 AM

By Monica Piga Wallace

It is time to end the “tradition” in Lancaster of using a team mascot that promotes offensive stereotypes and creates a hostile learning environment.

Dictionaries define “redskin” as “offensive,” “disparaging,” “pejorative” and “contemptuous.” From its genocidal origins to even Disney songs calling Native Americans “dirty redskin devils,” the term has a long history of disparaging use. News organizations around the country refuse to print the word, deeming it no less offensive than the N-word, and trademark protection was recently canceled for the NFL team bearing that name because law does not protect disparaging trademarks. To suggest that the term is not a racial slur is to deny its very meaning and origin. Even if the word is not offensive to all, it is certainly offensive to many.

In addition to being offensive, the mascot is harmful. Studies show that Native American team mascots perpetuate stereotypes and cause psychological harm to Native American people, particularly children. Team names like the “Redskins” establish an unwelcome and hostile learning environment, lower the self-esteem of Native American children and undermine the educational experiences for all students. More than 100 professional organizations, including civil rights groups, educational organizations, athletic organizations, Native American organizations and religious groups, have called for an end to the use of Native American mascots in sports. Schools across the nation have heeded this call, including 28 high schools that have specifically abandoned the “Redskin” mascot.

Those who support keeping the name cite tradition and claim it “honors” Native Americans. Native Americans do not feel honored. More than 23 Native American organizations representing over 1.2 million people have voiced their opposition to the NFL team name, stating that it “perpetuates a centuries-old stereotype of Native Americans as ‘blood-thirsty savages’ and ‘noble warriors.’” If the people whom we claim to honor say that it does not do so, how can we insist they are wrong?

As a public school district with a mission to provide a safe and welcoming learning environment, one that teaches respect and tolerance, Lancaster simply cannot continue to

endorse this practice. More than 50 years ago, in its landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* school desegregation ruling, the Supreme Court highlighted the important role that schools play in our democracy, declaring schools “the principal instrument in awakening a child to cultural values.” Where studies prove that Native American mascots perpetuate negative stereotypes, lower self-esteem and foster a hostile learning environment, how can we continue to condone this practice merely for the sake of school “tradition”?

Monica Piga Wallace of Lancaster is a member of the legal skills faculty at the University at Buffalo Law School.

Direct Link: <http://www.buffalonews.com/opinion/another-voice/another-voice-redskin-mascot-is-offensive-and-promotes-a-hostile-learning-environment-20150305>